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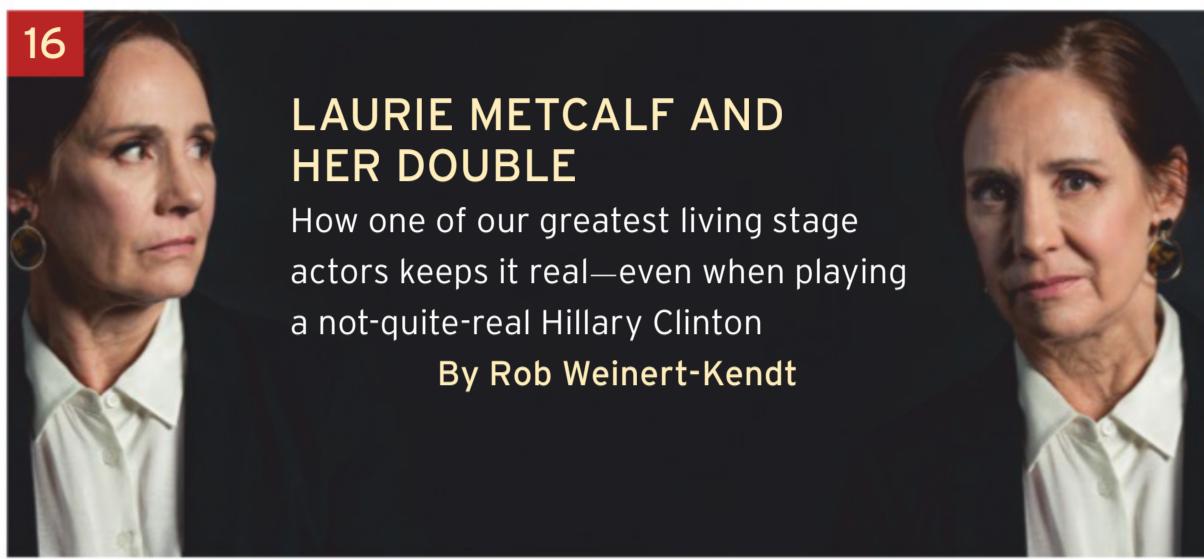
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COVER: Laurie Metcalf, currently appearing in the Broadway premiere of *Hillary and Clinton*, written by Lucas Hnath and directed by Joe Mantello. Photo by Heidi Bohnenkamp for *American Theatre*, with styling by Nicha Petprasert Jones and grooming by Natasha and Olivia for Face Time Beauty.

# AMERICAN THEATRE

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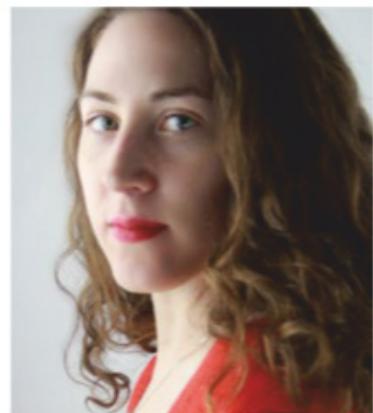
NE OF MY QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE JOB OF RUNNING A magazine about theatre in the U.S., if I may say so myself, is that I have a strong sense of theatre in places other than New York City. I first became a dedicated theatregoer in earnest in Los Angeles; companies like Cornerstone, East West Players, the Actors' Gang, Latino Theater Company, Center Theatre Group, and dozens of others formed my tastes and expectations as much or more than any Broadway or Off-Broadway shows, to which my access was limited by my airfare budget. From that West Coast base I explored not only the I-5 corridor from La Jolla Playhouse to Oregon Shakes, but got a sense of other American theatre towns from actors and creatives who poured into L.A. for its other career attractions and ended up doing theatre anyway (sometimes in spite of themselves). I met refugees from Seattle's late-'90s bubble-burst; ex-New Yorkers who'd worked mostly in regional theatres like Yale or Actors Theatre of Louisville, or who formed L.A. off-shoots of New York companies, like Ensemble Studio Theatre West; and Chicagoans bearing the storefront ensemble gospel.

Among those Windy City exiles was Laurie Metcalf, who I had the great good fortune of first seeing onstage in a series of uproarious comedies by L.A.'s Gen-X Molière, Justin Tanner, at the Cast Theatre in Hollywood, a two-theatre complex just west of the Paramount lot. With roles in *Pot Mom*, *Happytime Xmas*, and *Party Mix*, Metcalf was no stage hog, despite her outsize celebrity (she was then basically playing hooky from "Roseanne"). Instead she fit seamlessly into the Cast's peerless ensemble of distinctive oddballs (Jon Palmer, Laurel Green, Dana Schwartz, Andy Daley, among others). This, I soon learned, had something to do with her background as a founding member of Chicago's ur-ensemble, Steppenwolf, where the operative ethos potently fused a self-effacing Midwestern work ethic with go-for-broke theatrical commitment.

So it's particularly gratifying to see Metcalf's continued stage domination in a series of Broadway hits, including *A Doll's House, Part 2*, *Three Tall Women*, and *Misery*. Next: a lead in one of this season's most-anticipated shows, *Hillary and Clinton*. In my cover story on her unique, mercurial brilliance (p. 16), I try to bring a sense of her work before and beyond this glittering and well-deserved Broadway career peak. She is where she is because of where she's been before, and this is as true of her as of everyone and everything that makes it to New York stages. It's true of the vibrant new musicals highlighted by Suzy Evans in her report on the state of Broadway's most commercial form in the wake of hits like *Hamilton* and *Dear Evan Hansen* (p. 26). It's true of the hit Broadway stage version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which as Stuart Miller reveals has a rich and tangled literary (and legal) history (with new revelations coming to light even as we were going to press; it's on p. 32). And it's true of producer Daryl Roth, who, as pictured in Diep Tran's profile (p. 22), came to the commercial theatre in her 40s to fight the good fight for diversity and daring in an arena where the stakes, and the potential impact on the larger field, are high.

For while the nonprofit resident theatre movement of 50 years ago has ensured, thankfully, that our nation's commercial theatre capital no longer has a monopoly on U.S. stage work—if it did, it's unlikely I would be here today, writing this—New York is still inarguably an energy source, standard-bearer, and launchpad for our field. Just as nothing gets to a Manhattan stage without determination and struggle (and funding), what happens in New York theatre doesn't usually stay in New York. —ROB WEINERT-KENDT

## CONTRIBUTORS



ELLE ELLE PHOTOGRAPHIE

The moment the musical *A Strange Loop* was announced for Playwrights Horizons' 2018-19 season, **Shoshana Greenberg** knew she wanted to write about it (p. 44), as she's been impressed by playwright/composer Michael R. Jackson's work since catching it in a workshop in 2006. His "unique and engaging perspective on the world, and his authenticity, always come through in his work and in his life," says Greenberg, herself a writer of musicals. As she talked with Jackson about how all his varied interests—from social media to soap operas to politics—come together in his work and life, she thinks she may have glimpsed the future of the art. "It's heartening to talk to theatre professionals invested in the future of the musical form," she says.



JENNY ANDERSON

Another musical-theatre aficionado, **Suzy Evans**, found it "a dream writing assignment" to talk to creators about current trends in the form (p. 26). Though initially concerned that this year on Broadway was looking thin for new musicals not based on Hollywood films or hit song catalogues, she needn't have worried, as before long "a diverse crop of new shows popped up for the spring season, and things got more exciting." There was almost too much to talk about, in fact, she noted. "I could have written a book with all the reporting I gathered during this process—where you see a single quote, imagine a 10-page transcript!"



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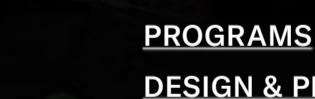
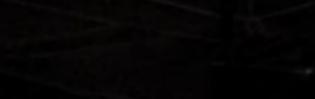
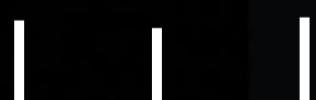


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# Looking Back, Looking Forward

BY ADRIAN BUDHU

## 'M IN A CELEBRATORY MOOD.

We often get caught up in the things that are not working or not working well or aren't perfect. What's perfection, though? The boundaries between work and life are blurred, causing an imbalance, not only affecting our well-being but also our time with friends and family. Not that you need my permission, but it's okay to slow down, stop, and take a moment to celebrate the incredible things happening in our lives, in our theatres, and in the world. Because there are so many. Even one of Theatre Communications Group's programming tracks at the National Conference in Miami (June 5-7) is on Wellness and Well-Being.

I am slowing down to bask in the afterglow of TCG's 2019 Gala: Our Stories. It was a magical night for TCG as we celebrated the interconnectedness of the nonprofit and commercial worlds—its individual artists, producers, theatre owners, trustees, and funders. We celebrated the stories of Martha Rivers Ingram, chairman emerita of Ingram Industries, a true champion of and believer in the arts who helped found Nashville Repertory Theatre; Tony Kushner, the incomparable playwright who gave us *Angels in America* and inspired a generation of artists and audiences; Rick Miramontez, one of theatre's most accomplished and prolific press agents, who navigates theatre on and Off-Broadway in both the commercial and not-for-profit realms, and believes that "every day is opening night"; and TCG's longstanding programs and commitment to advancing leaders of color in the field. Jacob G. Padrón, newly appointed artistic director of Long Wharf Theatre and the founder and former artistic director of the Sol Project, left us hopeful with a reminder of the larger vision for inclusion in the field, stressing "that our stages can reflect the communities we hope to serve" and "that we can and must work together to reclaim our shared humanity and to support TCG's vision to create 'a better world for theatre, a better world because of theatre.'" To all the honorees, co-chairs, sponsors, performers, and guests of Our Stories, I

say *thank you*. Thank you for giving me (us) something to celebrate.

I am also taking a hard stop to celebrate a huge milestone for TCG: the 35th anniversary of *American Theatre* magazine. On this occasion we take stock

**Slow down, stop, and take a moment to celebrate the incredible things that are happening in our theatres.**



WALTER MCBRIDE

Jacob G. Padrón, center, with Long Wharf Theatre staff and board members at TCG's 2019 Gala in New York City.

of some highlights from the past three and a half decades. To accurately share the history of *AT*, we must recognize the first issue of *Theatre Communications*—a newsletter that began in 1979, predating this magazine, which was officially launched in April of 1984 with an issue featuring Sam Shepard on its cover. In the next year came the first play-script in the magazine, Emily Mann's *Execution of Justice*. This issue is no. 360, and you might say we've come "full circle" with Aleshea Harris's *What to Send Up When It Goes Down*. Over the years *American Theatre* has received a number of awards for editorial and design excellence, and *AT* founding editor-in-chief Jim O'Quinn was honored with the Excellence in Editing award from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. (Speaking of theatre education, we have pre- and post-conferences in Miami focused on theatre training programs and theatre for young audiences). In 2014 we launched the magazine's online counterpart, [americantheatre.org](http://americantheatre.org), providing rich, unparalleled content to millions of readers.

I continue to be extremely proud of the magazine for not only celebrating and recognizing the important stories of our field, but also playing a role in analyzing and building awareness that supports TCG's ED&I values. In 2018 we launched Token Theatre Friends, hosted by *AT* senior editor Diep Tran and freelance contributor Jose Solís, a video and podcast series that takes a critical yet quirky look at shows currently onstage through an ED&I lens.

I pause for another moment to recognize all the incredible theatres, artists, managers, funders, donors, and patrons who continue to support and lift the incredible art of theatremaking. They give us hope, illuminate the stories that shape our world, and embody TCG's ambitious vision: a better world because of and for theatre. That's something to celebrate all year round. 

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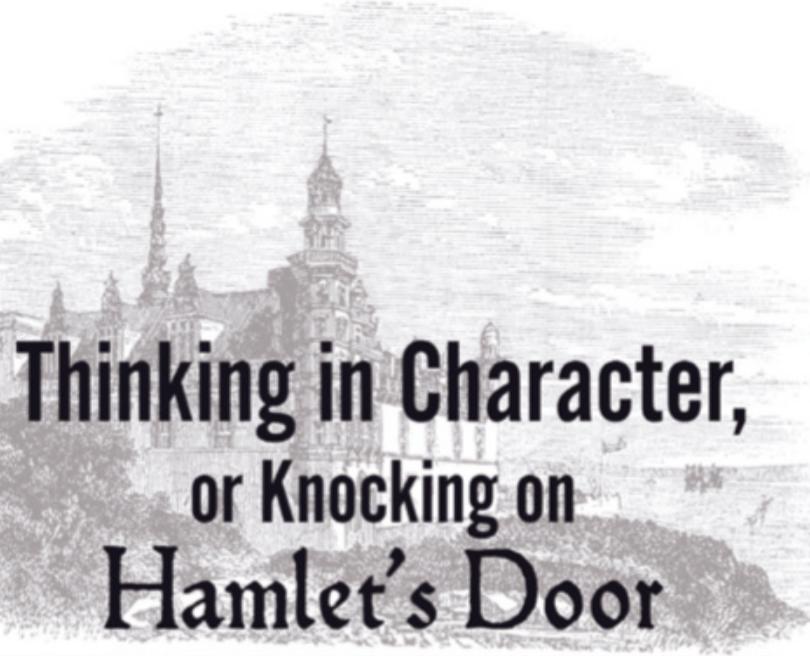
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Emily Mann.

MATT PILSNER

# Emily Mann Leading Light

BY ROB WEINERT-KENDT

**T**HERE'S NEWS, AND THEN THERE'S BIG NEWS. The announcement in January that Emily Mann would plan one last season at McCarter Theatre Center, then step down from the post in 2020, was definitely the latter. In leading Princeton, N.J.'s \$12.5 million theatre from a respected regional outpost to a Tony-winning incubator of new work (including her own plays, such as *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years* and *Mrs. Packard*) and new talent, she put her stamp not only on generations of theatre artists but creative administrators as well.

**ROB WEINERT-KENDT:** This is big news.

**EMILY MANN:** Big, scary news, yes. Huge for me anyway.

Also huge for the field. Does one say "congratulations" in a case like this?

Sure. It is kind of a congratulations. It's 30 years. It's a whole life.

And it's hard to imagine life without McCarter for me, so I'm going through all of this along with everyone else. It's so funny, people are saying, "Are you happy, are you sad, are you..." You know? It's such a complex series of emotions. And it's still a year and a half to go, I tell everyone. So there's plenty more work to do. Lots of partying too.

**You're leaving the McCarter, but this is not a retirement.**

Oh my dear, no. In the words of the great John Kani, who wrote me, "My dear, we elders in our industry never retire. We simply shift gears and become even more useful." Which is exactly right. I am stepping down from McCarter so I can do more work. I'm letting go of the administration of the theatre, but I want to be able to be writing more, to be directing more, to be free to follow all kinds of new paths. I also have a lot of irons in the fire. Right now I'm in a kind of new flowering of writing. I wrote two plays last summer, both *Gloria: A Life* (see p. 22) and an adaptation of *The Pianist* for

APRIL

ALMANAC

BY THE OSCAR G. BROCKETT CENTER FOR THEATRE HISTORY AND CRITICISM



MILL MOUNTAIN THEATRE

The Fantasticks at Mill Mountain Playhouse in 1966.

## 245 YEARS AGO (1774)

*A Bold Stroke for a Wife* by Susanna Centlivre, produced by the American Company, opens in Charleston, S.C. This mounting serves as an example of the writer's posthumous popularity, as Centlivre, one of the most successful English dramatists of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, continues to be one of the most widely produced female playwrights after her death in 1723.

## 100 YEARS AGO (1919)

Radical magazine *The Liberator*, edited by Max Eastman, publishes Mary P. Burrill's play *Aftermath*. The play, which is set in rural South Carolina, follows a young African American man who returns from military service overseas in World War I to discover that his father has been lynched. The piece will be produced in 1928 by the Krigwa Players in New York City.

Broadway. So I'm in the midst of incredible creative activity, and I just want to start following those dreams for a while.

**The field is in the midst of a generational turnover, just as you were part of one 30 years ago. I wonder how this moment looks to you.**

At this moment I know there's a group of young leaders, artistic leaders. They are artists and they are leaders, and that's a very rare combination, and I hope these boards will be meeting with them and seeing if they can find the right fit. It's quite an interesting passing of the torch, or changing of the guard. As I say, I'm not retiring. I'm hoping to do more than ever. But in terms of running the theatre day to day, it's definitely time for the next wave. It's time for these exciting young artists to make their marks. It's a hard time to be—I mean, it's always a hard time to be running a theatre.

**What are you most proud of in your decades at the McCarter?**

Three things, and they're related. One is all of the extraordinary new work we were able to commission, develop, nurture, and grow, much of which we produced and some of which we helped get produced elsewhere. It's a diverse and extraordinary group of playwrights. And of course, I was able to do my own work too—some of my biggest plays started here.

And then there's mentorship. I look out at the industry now and I see how many extraordinary artistic directors, stage managers, marketing, every department—we have stars all over the country that started here. That fills me with enormous joy, because that is a huge part of what I think of as my legacy. We take the training of young leaders, artists, and administrators very seriously here, and that has paid off enormously for the profession.

And then third is that we brought our education and engagement right into the center of the artistic staff. The work that we have done in our community has been an enormous source of gratification for me, and it's been a great privilege to be able to make an impact on a huge level, both for young people and seniors, people who are in some ways afflicted by the ills of our world, whom we have brought hope and the

power of the theatre, both in terms of seeing work but also in terms of creating it. That's been a great part of this journey.

**The founding story of the regional theatre in the 1960s has been often told. Less often told is the story of folks like you and Carey Perloff and Tony Taccone, who took over from the founding generation in the 1980s and 1990s, many of whom are now passing the torch. What has been the story of last 30 or so years?**

I think it has a lot to do with the things that I was talking about. We worked very hard to bring women and people of color onto the mainstages and into the story of America by telling the stories on our stages. For me, it was a mission from the moment I hit the ground in Princeton. When we opened the first season with *Betsey Brown*, a musical I wrote with Ntozake Shange and Baikida Carroll, there hadn't been the work of any person of color on the stage yet. I was stunned. But it was 1991. There was a lot of work to be done, and that meant opening up who the audience was. I think I'm not alone in having done that. And so women and non-European or non-white people—that was my mission from the moment I arrived, and I think it probably was too for many of my colleagues at the same time. Not all, believe me. But some of us, we were comrades in arms.

I think also the idea of reaching out into the community was something personally very important to me because of my activist side. I think that was more true of many of us than our predecessors. I would think those are the two big marks that we made, and there's a lot of work still left to do on all of this. But we did break down some barriers.

**You're going to plan one final season, titled "Signature Emily." Can you give any teasers yet?**

It will be very much like any of my best seasons. It will have new work and commissioned work. Women and people of color are well represented. I will be as well. It's not as if I'll be reprising "Emily's greatest hits"; I decided that is not the way I want to go out. It's all very forward-looking. But each one signifies something important in what I believe in in terms of what the American theatre should be all about and what the McCarter's been all about. ☑

#### **95 YEARS AGO (1924)**

Famed Italian tragedienne Eleanora Duse dies of pneumonia at 64 in a Pittsburgh hotel while on a U.S. tour. Just days before, she performed in *The Closed Door* at the Syria Mosque in Pittsburgh and will receive a hero's welcome for burial in Italy. Her acting inspired a young Stanislavsky and countless GOAT (greatest of all time) debates in the press, contrasting the performance styles of Duse and Sarah Bernhardt.

#### **55 YEARS AGO (1964)**

Roanoke Summer Theater, a summer-stock company in the eponymous Virginia town, opens its doors before staging its first show, *Carousel*, in June. The company, which will later change its name to Mill Mountain Playhouse and then Mill Mountain Theatre, will go on to present national and world premieres, including the U.S. debut of *Children of Eden*, and host the annual Norfolk Southern Festival of New Works.

#### **40 YEARS AGO (1979)**

The League of Chicago Theatres holds a first official meeting at the nightclub Zorine's. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the group is "the first theatre organization in the country that unites commercial, nonprofit, community, educational, Equity, and non-union theatres to build audience interest." Over the coming decades the league's membership will grow to more than 200 theatres.

#### **35 YEARS AGO (1984)**

The American Indian Theatre Company debuts *Black Elk Speaks*, adapted by Christopher Sergel from the John G. Heihardt book, at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center in Oklahoma. *American Theatre*'s first issue reports that the 31-member cast features David Carradine—though not of Native descent, he received permission to play the title role from the Oglala Lakota holy man's family—plus three of Black Elk's great-grandchildren.



JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

■ The University of Texas at Austin has announced **Annie Baker** and **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins** as incoming faculty of their College of Fine Arts. In the fall the two will join UT's MFA playwriting program, which aims to teach craft and skill with a focus on experimentation. This will not be the first time Baker and Jacobs-Jenkins have worked together: Previ-

ously the two served as co-artistic directors for the Goldberg MFA playwriting program at Hunter College of the City University of New York.

■ Triad Stage in Greensboro, N.C., has announced that founding managing director **Rich Whittington** will step down from his position at the end of the 2018-19 season. Whittington, who has been with the company for two decades, will be succeeded by his long-standing partner, founding artistic director **Preston Lane**. Triad Stage's board of trustees has decided to adopt a new operating model, and Lane will lead the organization as producing artistic director.

■ The Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis has welcomed **James Haskins** as its new managing director, working under artistic director Joseph Haj. Haskins stepped into the role on March 25, and replaces Jennifer Bielstein, who left the theatre to help run American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Haskins comes to the Guthrie after 12 years as managing director of the Wilma Theater in Philadelphia.

■ The MacDowell Colony of New York City and Peterborough, N.H., has named **Philip Himberg** its new executive director. Himberg, currently the artistic director of Sundance Institute's Thea-



FRED HAYES FOR SUNDANCE INSTITUTE

tre Program, will succeed Cheryl Young, who is retiring after 30 years at the helm. Himberg will take up the post on June 1 from the NYC office, and will work closely with David Macy, who will continue to serve as MacDowell's resident director in New Hampshire. □

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■ Barrington Stage Company in Pittsfield, Mass., has announced **Stacey Rose's *America v. 2.1: The Sad Demise & Eventual Extinction of the American Negro*** as the winner of the first Bonnie and Terry Burman New Play Award. Rose will receive \$25,000, and her play, selected from among almost 500 submissions, will be produced as a world premiere at Barrington Stage. Among the finalists for the Burman Award are *Steal Her Bones* by **Thomas Gibbons**, *Eight Nights* by **Jennifer Maisel**, *2144 South St.* by **Karina Billini**, and (*end of message*) by **Laura Jacqmin**.

■ Cygnet Theatre in San Diego, Calif., has announced the recipients of this year's Finish Line—a Bill and Judy Garrett Commission. The selected works were **Leah Nanako Winkler's *Diversity Awareness Picnic***, **Kate Hamill's *The Prostitute Play***, and **Herbert Siguenza's *Bad Hombres/Good Wives***. The winning plays were each given a weeklong workshop and were presented as free public readings in February. The playwrights also received a financial reward and the potential for their plays to have a world premiere production at Cygnet.

■ New York City's Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF) has presented the 2018 *Zelda Fichandler Award* to **Loretta Greco**, artistic director of Magic Theatre in San Francisco. Created in honor of the founder of Washington, D.C.'s Arena

Stage, the annual honor recognizes directors and choreographers who have made prominent achievements in the field with an investment in a particular community or region.

■ Newark, N.J.-based Audible, Inc., has announced the second group of playwrights selected to receive support from its emerging playwrights fund. The \$5 million fund is dedicated to supporting the development of English-language theatre works from around the globe. This cohort will include **Nick Carr**, **Christopher Chen**, **Elinor Cook**, **Berri George**, **Carla Grauls**, **Eric Micha Holmes**, **Lindsay Joelle**, **Charlotte Josephine**, **Mike Lew**, and **Marisela Treviño Orta**. The playwrights will receive financial support plus creative and logistical resources to support their projects. The fund will also support the audio production of each commission and a live stage component for some of the projects.

■ The Wilbury Theatre Group has named **Darcie Dennigan** its playwright-in-residence. The residency is part of the company's new-works development program, Studio W, and offers a two-year renewable term at the discretion of the artistic director. Dennigan has served as Wilbury Theatre Group's community engagement manager for the Providence Fringe Festival since 2016. For the residency, she will be given the opportunity to develop new work with the

support of workshops, and private and public readings at the theatre.

■ The American Theatre Wing in NYC has announced the recipients of the Andrew Lloyd Webber Initiative's programming, which includes the 4-Year University Scholarships, Training Scholarships, and Classroom Resources Grants. This year's recipients of the 4-Year University Scholarships include **Nena Daniels**, **Daelin Elzie**, **Anijah Lezama**, **Corina Matos Aguilera**, **Alyssa Payne**, **Hannah-Kathryn Wall**, and **Avery Woodruff**. The Training Scholarships, which support public middle and high school students, will go to **Austin Anderson**, **Nicholas Askew**, **Eugene Bois**, **Armani Brown**, **Jacqueline Cabrero**, **Jazmyne Charles**, **Ingrid Nicole Corleto**, **Jamia Croft**, **Joilynn Green**, **Rich Adrian Lazatin**, **Sydney Lopes**, **Kelly Lukito**, **Freedom Martin**, **Amara McNeil**, **Katelyn Ortiz**, **Elise Porter**, **Imani Preyor**, **Anthony Quintana**, **Julia Schick**, **Iabella Torres**, **Imani Turner**, **Indigo Turner**, and **Carrington Vaughn**. Among this year's Classroom Resource Grants recipients are **Hagerman Elementary School**, **McCluer High School**, **Tyler Elementary School**, **Charter School of New Castle**, **Chavez High School**, the **Donald McKay K-8 School**, **East Lee County High School**, **Gregory-Lincoln Education Center School** of

**Performing and Visual Arts**, **Mariposa Elementary School**, **Northside High School**, **Steel Academy**, **Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts**, and **Washington Middle School**.

■ The American Theatre Wing has also named the recipients of the 2019 **Jonathan Larson Grants**, which recognize emerging composers, lyricists, and book writers in honor of the late theatre writer. This year's winners include writing team **Julia Gytri** and **Avi Amon**, **Emily Gardner Xu Hall**, **Andy Roninson**, and **Ben Wexler**. In addition to a gift of \$10,000, the grant winners receive support in the form of residencies and concerts and a \$2,500 Saw Island Foundation Recording Grant to support the recording of a demo. The winners presented their work at an awards ceremony on March 19 in New York City.

■ The San Diego Theatre Critics Circle announced the recipients of the 17th annual **Craig Noel Awards**, which recognize excellence in the San Diego theatre community. The top winners, with four awards each, included the Old Globe's staging of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and Lamb's Players Theatre's production of *Once*. **David Ellenstein**, artistic director of North Coast Repertory Theatre, was named director of the year; the Don Braunagel Award for Outstanding Achievement, which honors a small company, went to **Roustabouts Theatre Co.** 

# ROLE CALL

## PEOPLE TO WATCH

BY STEPH GOLUB AND CAITLYN HALVORSEN



Cisneros

### ALEJANDRA CISNEROS

**PROFESSION:** Director and producer

**HOMETOWN:** Born in Miami, raised in Los Angeles

**CURRENT HOME:** Los Angeles

**KNOWN FOR:** Cisneros recently received a Leadership U: One-on-One grant, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group, with her residency at Center Theatre Group. For her CTG

residency she produced an improv and sketch show, *Chisme y Queso*, for two seasons. She also produces the “cult classic superhero” series *El Verde!* She’s an alum of Director’s Lab West, a NALAC Leadership Institute Fellow, a Directing FAIR Fellow at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and a Nathan Cummings Young Leaders of Color recipient.



SASHA ISRAEL  
Benson

### FRANCE-LUCE BENSON

**PROFESSION:** Playwright/educator

**HOMETOWN:** Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (a.k.a. Zaire), raised in Miami

**CURRENT HOME:** Los Angeles

**KNOWN FOR:** Among Benson’s most produced plays are *Fati’s Last Dance* and *The Talk*. Her play *Deux Femmes on the Edge de la Revolution Part 1* also received attention during its workshop at the New Black Fest

in 2018. The first installment of a trilogy, *Deux Femmes Part 1* won Benson a residency at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, as part of the Cultural Diaspora Program.

**WHAT’S NEXT:** Minneapolis’s Playwright’s Center will produce *Deux Femmes Part 1* as a workshop this July. Her play *Detained* is in development with Ensemble Studio Theatre/Los Angeles.



JESSICA MULLINS  
Mullins

### MICHAEL MULLINS

**PROFESSION:** Technical director, scenic designer, and sound designer

**HOMETOWN:** Wellington, Ohio

**CURRENT HOME:** Houston

**KNOWN FOR:** Mullins, the technical director for A.D. Players at the George Theater, previously served as assistant technical director at the Houston Grand Opera.

**WHAT’S NEXT:** He is transforming the George Theater’s stage into a black box to honor the founder of A.D. Players, Jennette Clift George. After that he’ll assist in A.D. Players’ productions of *The God Committee* and *West Side Story*.

**WHAT MAKES HIM SPECIAL:** “Michael is our technical director in job title, but the limited description doesn’t do him jus-

**WHAT’S NEXT:** She currently works at OSF as community liaison for the theatre’s *La Comedia of Errors* tour, and she is in pre-production for a new episode of *El Verde!*

**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** CTG’s community partnerships director, Jesus Reyes, describes Cisneros as a source of strength and determination. “What the theatre needs now more than ever is family and force, to make things happen and to help people understand that there is more than just the self and to create long-lasting change,” Reyes says. “Keep an eye out for Hurricane Alejandra, because she’s ready to shake up U.S. theatre.”

**OWNING OUR NARRATIVES:** “I want the field to reflect global citizenship and commit to equitable access for all,” says Cisneros. “The single thing that keeps me going is the desire to produce new work that uplifts communities of color through joy and laughter. In elevating these voices, we regain ownership over our narratives and void the single story, uplifting individuality as awesomeness.”

**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** Benson was among the first playwrights featured in the Monologue Project, an online resource for women of the African diaspora cultivated by Bishop Arts Theatre Center in Dallas. Her monologue “deeply resonated with me,” says Bishop Arts’ executive artistic director, Teresa Coleman Wash. In an interview for *The Dramatist*, Benson told Coleman Wash about “the emotionally debilitating narrow perceptions” she must combat as Black female writer. Concludes Coleman Wash, “Her work is beautifully compelling and engaging, and deserves a platform.”

**HEALING THROUGH HUMOR:** Benson, whose plays celebrate Haiti’s history and culture, believes in the power of laughter. “My favorite kind of work is anything that makes me laugh, really laugh, while also illuminating poignant truths about the human condition,” she says. “Laughter can be profoundly transformative, and writing humor is such an extraordinary skill. If you can make people laugh, you’re essentially a healer.”

tic,” said Jennifer Dean, marketing director of A.D. Players, who adds “outstanding and thoughtful mentor” and “superior set and sound designer” to his credits. “Michael is only capable of going the extra mile, even when you specifically tell him not to do so! His DNA won’t allow him to settle for anything less than excellent.”

**A THRIVING ARTISTRY:** Mullins strives to create opportunities for not only himself, but other artists. “I enjoy teaching theatre technicians to think as artists, encouraging designers to expand their craft, and collaborating with company executives to ensure them that their dreams/mission for our company are attainable,” he says. “Our industry is ultimately about storytelling and learning how to survive and thrive as starving artists, literally and philosophically. It certainly feels like an unachievable task, but the chase creates a blissful, unquenchable thirst for more.”



# PACIFIC PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL

Joe Ngo, Abraham Kim, Brooke Ishibashi,  
Jane Lu and Raymond Lee in South Coast Repertory's  
2018 world premiere of *Cambodian Rock Band* by Lauren Yee. Photo: Jordan Kubat



**APRIL 26-28**

## WORLD PREMIERE PRODUCTIONS

**POOR YELLA  
REDNECKS**  
by Qui Nguyen  
directed by May Adrales

**SHEEPDOG**  
by Kevin Artigue  
directed by Leah C. Gardiner

## STAGED READINGS

**PRELUDE TO  
A KISS**  
music by Dan Messé  
lyrics by Sean Hartley & Dan Messé  
book by Craig Lucas  
directed by David Ivers

**THE CANADIANS**  
by Adam Bock  
directed by Jaime Castañeda

**MASK ONLY**  
by Ana Nogueira  
directed by Mike Donahue

**UNLIKEABLE  
HEROINE**  
by Melissa Ross  
directed by Gaye Taylor Upchurch

**WHITELISTED**  
by Chisa Hutchinson  
directed by Sarah Rasmussen

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Steinberg Charitable Trust**, **The Elizabeth George Foundation**  
and **The Pacific Playwrights Festival Honorary Producers**.



Stollmack

**NOELE STOLLMACK****PROFESSION:** Lighting and scenic designer**HOMETOWN:** Montclair, N.J.**CURRENT HOME:** Milwaukee**KNOWN FOR:** She worked on both international tours of *Mercy* and *Impermanence*, and recently finished lighting *The Chinese Lady* at Milwaukee Rep. She also created the concert design for the vocal ensemble of composer Meredith Monk.**WHAT'S NEXT:** She will light productions at her two favorite companies, the Forward Theatre in Madison, Wisc., and the Purple Rose Theatre in Chelsea, Mich.**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** After working with Stollmack on their production of Amy Herzog's *4,000 Miles*, Forward Theatre artistic director Jennifer Uphoff Gray says, "I was

immediately so impressed by her brilliant blend of artistry and no-nonsense pragmatism." It's a balance that's rare in the business, Gray says. "When I find a collaborator who has it, I want to work with them again and again. As a director I absolutely love having Noele on my team—she makes all of our work look better, and is a calm, steady presence in tech."

**LIGHTING UP STORIES:** "Years ago, a director for a new project stated that she wanted the lighting to feel like 'the weather,'" said Stollmack. "She was not talking about an effect. She wanted the light to interact with the actors and the performance space like...the weather. I translated that concept into a composition that collaborated with—or in that case, created—the stage picture in an integrative fashion like another character onstage. The design enhanced, not overwhelmed, or distracted from the story." She thinks of that director's note, and her experience responding to it, as a major influence on her approach to lighting and scenic design.



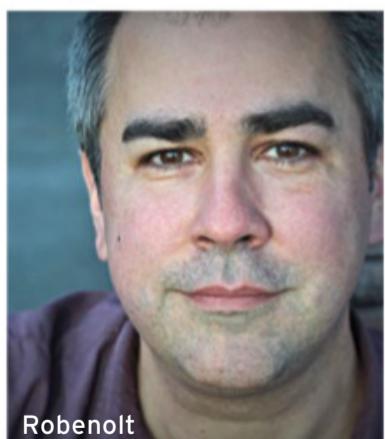
Piniella

**REYNALDO PINIELLA****PROFESSION:** Actor/writer/director**HOMETOWN:** Born in Elmhurst, Queens, raised in East New York, Brooklyn**CURRENT HOME:** Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan**KNOWN FOR:** Piniella was among the cast of the 2017 production of Suzan-Lori Parks's *Venus* and the 2016 production of Parks's *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, both at Signature Theatre. He also played Henry in Theatre for a New Audience's 2017 production of *The Skin of Our Teeth*.**WHAT'S NEXT:** Piniella is a recent recipient of the Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship for Exceptional Merit, which supports the artistic growth of an actor through their collabora-

tion with a TCG Member Theatre, in this case Classical Theatre of Harlem, with whom he'll develop a bilingual production of *Hamlet*. And Piniella's own play *Black Doves* has been selected for HB Studio's 2019 Rehearsal Space Residency.

**WHAT MAKES HIM SPECIAL:** Director Emily Lyon first met Piniella at the Shakespeare Initiative at the Public, then called the Shakespeare Society, and he impressed her as "one of the hardest-working actors in the business—I can never keep up with all the readings and shows he's doing. He's also dedicated to constantly growing and learning. If you want a true professional who will work hard, call him."

**THINK PIECES:** "I believe in the power of storytelling to create change and open minds," says Piniella, who was introduced to theatre by his high school English teacher. Years later, his passion for the field hasn't dwindled. "I'm interested in theatre that is inclusive, accessible, and aims to leave the audience thinking long after the curtain call is over."



Robenolt

**TOM ROBENOLT****PROFESSION:** Actor/director/administrator**HOMETOWN:** Born in Corpus Christie, Texas, raised across the U.S. and Germany**CURRENT HOME:** Queens, N.Y.**KNOWN FOR:** A frequent actor at Alaska's Fairbanks Shakespeare Theatre, Robenolt co-conceived and directed *Lear Khekkwaii*, an Alaskan Native adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which toured remote Alaskan Native villages on a Shakespeare in American Communities NEA grant. **WHAT'S NEXT:** A role in Perseverance Theatre's upcoming production of *Guys and Dolls*, and *Macbeth* at FST this summer. He's also at work on an audio recording of *The Tempest*.

**WHAT MAKES HIM SPECIAL:** "He is smart, dedicated, and a true lover of the theatre arts," says Carey Seward, who has known Robenolt since they were both young actors in Fairbanks, Alaska. Seward, now the managing director of FST, notes Robenolt's consistent efforts to create authenticity onstage. "He designs the action in his head until he has crafted the perfect moments."

**ART AND COMMUNITY:** Robenolt caught the Shakespeare bug soon after college, working as an actor with FST and the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. "The work I was able to do as a young actor at these theatres and observing their solid structure as organizations launched me into a career of acting, directing, and administration," he says. He also cites the leadership of these organizations as inspiration, saying, "I keep the pursuit of this profession because of the people I have met along the way, the stories that I get to share, and to witness the impact that art has on a community."

# SARASOTA FESTIVAL OF NEW PLAYS

SINCE 1983

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**WEDNESDAY'S CHILD** (April 3-May 24)

By Mark St. Germain

**THE WONDER YEARS** (February 6 - June 9)

Developed by Richard Hopkins and Rebecca Hopkins with arrangements by Jim Prosser

**A BEARY BIG ADVENTURE** (March 30 - April 20)

Winning plays from young playwrights ages 5-17

**NNPN WOMEN IN PLAYWRITING FESTIVAL**

**BABEL** (April 26)

By Jacqueline Goldfinger

**MUTHALAND** (May 3)

By Minita Gandhi

**THE FOREST** (May 10)

By Lia Romeo

Devon Ahmed in FST's World Premiere of *Honor Killing* (2018). Photo by Matthew Holler.

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# Laurie Metcalf and Her

HOW ONE OF OUR GREATEST LIVING STAGE ACTORS  
EVEN WHEN PLAYING A

BY ROB WEINERT-KENDT

**J**IGSAW PUZZLES—THAT'S HOW LAURIE METCALF occupies her offstage time, she told me recently after a rehearsal for the Broadway premiere of *Hillary and Clinton*, in which she'll play a version of the former First Lady and presidential candidate. It's a tempting metaphor for the way she pieces together her performances from discrete clues and suggestions and choices, or for the way she's assembled a uniquely distinguished career of stage and screen roles over four decades.

It also feels wrong, on more than one level. Though a typical Metcalf performance comprises thousands of tiny details and decisions—an odd inflection that brings out both a line's meaning and its opposite, a birdlike twist of the neck at unexpected news, a gait that somehow conveys the pace of her thoughts—there is nothing piecemeal about the effect. She may work like a pointillist, laying down her dots with meticulous care, but the canvases she produces give us portraits of whole people, even when those people are shattered. Indeed if I had to come up with one word to describe her work, it would be *soulful* (yes, even in the comedies; especially in the comedies).

It's also a mistake to see her far-flung stage résumé—roles in London, New York, L.A., Chicago—as scattered or disparate. One of the founding members of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Metcalf found in that basement-ensemble-turned-regional-powerhouse both a home base and that most precious of theatrical commodities, a true company ethic. She'd play a meaty lead in one show, do a scene-stealing walk-on in another, contribute sound design to a third. And though she's no longer based in the Windy City and has appeared at Steppenwolf only twice in the last decade, the ensemble ethos is in her bones, and theatres are her homing beacon in whatever city she's in; she can't stay away for long from the collaborative frisson of a rehearsal room, whether it's at the National Theatre in London or in a North Hollywood storefront. "I'm such a theatre addict," she told me, without qualification or apology. Said her ex-husband, Steppenwolf co-founder Jeff Perry, "Laurie would perform with a hat on the sidewalk for spare dimes, all the way to large checks with several zeroes—I don't know if it matters to her at all."

But there's a more mundane reason jigsaw puzzles can't describe

# Double

KEEPS IT REAL,  
NOT-QUITE-REAL HILLARY CLINTON



HEIDI BOHNENKAMP FOR AMERICAN THEATRE

what she's up to: She currently has no backstage time to do them, as she's in every scene of *Hillary and Clinton*. The same was true of her two latest Broadway roles, in last year's revival of Albee's *Three Tall Women* and in the previous year's premiere of *A Doll's House, Part 2*. In short, theatregoers are, lucky for us, getting a lot of Laurie Metcalf these days. She's getting a lot in the bargain too—not just Tony Awards for the last two years running (with little question she'll be a top contender this year too), but the satisfaction of doing her life's work at the very top of her game.

"It gives me energy," she said after an early rehearsal for *Hillary and Clinton* (now in previews, opening April 18 and running through July 21), her sympathetic brown eyes alight and her taut frame coiled in a plastic chair. She could have been talking about the rehearsal process, in which she throws as many ideas against the wall as she can before sculpting their shards into a final, repeatable performance; or about the adrenaline of performing in front of an audience, which can render her, by her own admission, "too wired onstage, a little too tense. Sometimes I catch myself not breathing." But in fact she was commenting in passing on an idea that

once flickered through her mind: to do *Voice Lessons*, a zany one-act farce by L.A. scribe Justin Tanner she's performed in tiny theatres a number of times since 2009, as a midnight show after *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, which she assayed in London to resounding acclaim in 2012. No intrepid producer ever took her up on this ploy, but the notion itself captures a few essential Metcalfian details: the whiplash-inducing range of her tastes and abilities, for one, but also her seemingly superhuman stamina.

*How would you even do that?* I wondered incredulously. Her simple reply summed up the non-zero-sum exchange with both collaborators and audiences that has sustained her spiritually if not always materially since the late '70s: "It gives me energy."

**LET'S BE CLEAR: THOUGH SHE'S SEEMINGLY BEEN** discovered anew, thanks in part to her recent Broadway winning streak, her searing, Oscar-nominated turn in the 2017 film *Lady Bird*, and the TV trauma-com now known as "The Conners," Laurie Metcalf has, by all accounts, been at the top of her game since she hit the field. Perry remembers seeing her in two productions

at Illinois State University when they were both teenagers: Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw* and Lanford Wilson's *Home Free*. In retrospect, he said, that double header was "a microcosm of what I would later marvel at: a range of remarkable comedic craft and stunning, authentic, unsentimentalized emotional embodiment." Behind the scenes in the succeeding decades he bore witness to her "combination of natural ability and fierce, gym-rat persistence."

Instincts and work ethic: These would seem to be the twin power sources of the Tesla coil that is Laurie Metcalf, from her early days balancing secretarial day jobs with wild nights in Steppenwolf's Highland Park church basement. Indeed it's hard to avoid talking about Metcalf in terms of dualities: not just comedy vs. drama ("She always had an uncanny ability for finding the funny in the sad, or the sad in the funny," as fellow Steppenwolfer Randall Arney put it) or small vs.



Top row, left to right: *The Glass Menagerie*; with Gary Sinise and William Petersen in *Balm in Gilead*; with Rondi Reed, Joan Allen, and Glenne Headly in *Waiting for the Parade*; with John Malkovich in *True West*. At right: *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*; *All My Sons* at Geffen Playhouse.



MICHAEL BROSILOW

MICHAEL LAMONT

## 1976

**STEPPENWOLF** — The Lover

## 1977

**STEPPENWOLF** — Our Late Night

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead  
Mack, Anything Goes Over the Rainbow  
The Sea Horse

## 1978

**STEPPENWOLF** — Home Free

Sandbar Flatland  
Fifth of July

## 1979

**STEPPENWOLF** — Exit the King

Waiting for Lefty  
The Glass Menagerie

## 1980

**STEPPENWOLF** — Balm in Gilead

Quiet Jeannie Green  
Absent Friends  
Savages

**WISDOM BRIDGE** — Getting Out

## 1981

**STEPPENWOLF** — Arms and the Man

Balm in Gilead  
Big Mother (as director)  
Action  
Waiting for the Parade

## 1982

**STEPPENWOLF** —

And a Nightingale Sang  
True West  
Loose Ends

**COLUMBIA COLLEGE** —

The Member of the Wedding

## 1983

**STEPPENWOLF** — Cloud Nine

Miss Firecracker Contest

**NORTHLIGHT** —

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

## 1984

**STEPPENWOLF** —

Orphans (sound design)

## 1984

**COLUMBIA COLLEGE** —

The Man Who Came to Dinner

**OFF-BROADWAY** — Balm in Gilead

## 1985

**STEPPENWOLF** — Coyote Ugly

**KENNEDY CENTER (D.C.)** — Coyote Ugly

## 1986

**STEPPENWOLF** —

You Can't Take It With You

**OFF-BROADWAY** — Bodies, Rest, Motion

**WILLIAMSTOWN** — School for Scandal

## 1987

**STEPPENWOLF** — Little Egypt

Educating Rita

**OFF-BROADWAY** — Educating Rita

## 1988

**STEPPENWOLF** — Killers

## 1990

**STEPPENWOLF** —

Wrong Turn at Lungfish

Love Letters

large ("I was warned when I was gonna step into sitcom land that you're acting in front of a camera now, it's not a 200-seat house or a 1,000-seat house, and so you've really gotta pull back," Metcalf told me, "but I found that not to be true, really, if it's based in reality"). One of her most striking and oft-noted polarities can only be thought of as a kind of double consciousness.

"She can be in absolute emotional chaos, as far as we can tell, but while working with her you realize she's also capable of the weird double awareness that the person in the third row of the balcony coughed too much or got up to leave," marveled Perry. Joe Mantello, who directed her in *Three Tall Women* and is doing the same in *Hillary and Clinton*, recalled a moment when, while rehearsing Sharr White's play *The Other Place*, Metcalf was "in the middle of a devastating scene, and did this bit of business that was so funny, she looked out at me and busted a gut—then went right back into it."

Tales of this uncanny ability being deployed in the commission of merciless onstage

pranks are legion. Said Anna D. Shapiro, Steppenwolf's current artistic director, who first directed Metcalf in Bruce Norris's *Purple Heart* in 2002: "She's well known for being able to be in the throes of anguish in a role, then flash someone offstage." For her longtime Steppenwolf compatriot Rondi Reed, Metcalf's practical jokes were an education in themselves. "People have said to me, 'You don't ever seem to crack onstage,' and I say, 'That's because I had to deal with Laurie Metcalf all my life. If you've been subjected to that, you have no worries.'"

But this isn't just the idle foolery of a pro showing off; it speaks to a larger capacity. Lucas Hnath, who wrote *A Doll's House, Part 2* and *Hillary and Clinton*, thinks that Metcalf's astounding ability to "occupy two contradictory mental-scapes at the same time" makes her an ideal interpreter of his work. "Her brain is like a supercomputer—like having extra processing power in the room," said Hnath. "She's a highly technical actor without sacrificing emotional integrity, which is the perfect actor for me. I like to work technically,

but there's that risk of it being cold and steely, and you don't have that with Laurie."

For her part, Metcalf thinks of these as complementary muscle groups. "I hope that after all these years that both sides are equally strong, both the technique and the instinct," she said. "So if they're both working together, that's what allows me to do that—to have one foot still in the emotional, but technically be able to remove myself."

The careful assembly work begins as soon as she gets a script and looks for "a kernel in there where it lands with me emotionally, and I think, 'I know exactly how to do this.'" She then starts "day-dreaming how I might play it; I visualize it in a blurry way," including rough stage pictures which—interestingly, for an actor who is avowedly camera-phobic—include herself. "I think I have a third eye that is watching," Metcalf said, though she was quick to add, "It's certainly not a director's eye."

Directorial or not, this extrasensory perception is more than just a freak talent. Mantello said that Metcalf, who is "always aware of the big picture," puts that awareness in the service of storytelling; if she has a third eye, it's looking on from the theatre seats. "It feels like, being in the room with her, that her goal is to make



MICHAEL BROSILOW



MICHAEL BROSILOW



MICHAEL BROSILOW



MICHAEL BROSILOW



ED KRIEGER



MICHAEL BROSILOW

**1992**  
**STEPPENWOLF** — My Thing of Love  
**1994**  
**STEPPENWOLF** — Libra  
**1995**  
**BROADWAY** — My Thing of Love  
**1997**  
**CAST THEATRE (L.A.)** — Pot Mom  
Happytime Xmas  
**1998**  
**STEPPENWOLF** — Pot Mom  
**CAST** — Party Mix  
**1999**  
**STEPPENWOLF** —  
The Beauty Queen of Leenane  
**CAST** —  
Still Life With Vacuum Salesman  
**2001**  
**GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE (L.A.)** —  
Looking for Normal  
**NATIONAL (LONDON)** — All My Sons

**2002**  
**STEPPENWOLF** — Purple Heart  
**2004**  
**STEPPENWOLF** —  
Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune  
**2006**  
**GEFFEN** — All My Sons  
**THIRD STAGE (L.A.)** — Pot Mom  
**2007**  
**GEFFEN** — The Quality of Life  
**2008**  
**BROADWAY** — November  
**ACT (S.F.)** — The Quality of Life  
**2009**  
**ZEPHYR (L.A.)** — Voice Lessons  
**BROADWAY** — Brighton Beach Memoirs  
**2010**  
**STEPPENWOLF** — Detroit  
**NEW GROUP (N.Y.)** — A Lie of the Mind  
**THEATRE ROW (N.Y.)** — Voice Lessons

**2011**  
**MCC** — The Other Place  
**WHITEFIRE (L.A.)** — Voice Lessons  
**2012**  
**WEST END** —  
Long Day's Journey Into Night  
**2013**  
**BROADWAY** — The Other Place  
**LINCOLN CENTER THEATER** —  
Domesticated  
**2015**  
**CIRCLE X (L.A.)** — Trevor  
**BROADWAY** — Misery  
**2016**  
**STEPPENWOLF** — Voice Lessons  
**2017**  
**BROADWAY** — A Doll's House, Part 2  
**2018**  
**BROADWAY** — Three Tall Women  
**2019**  
**BROADWAY** — Hillary and Clinton

the kinds of choices that will give the audience the ride of their lives,” said Mantello. “She’s willing to do anything to make that happen.”

Anything indeed: Colleagues gleefully related instances of her pronounced lack of vanity, bordering on self-abasement. Mantello laughed about the hideous wig she insisted on wearing in David Mamet’s 2008 Broadway comedy *November*. Shapiro said that Metcalf taught her “how critical humiliation is to humor.” Hnath mentioned her eagerness to vomit onstage, including in one scene in *A Doll’s House, Part 2* in which that impulse, though unrealized, helped underline a problem area of the play that called for a dramatic solution. “She was dramaturging,” said Hnath admiringly. In a 2006 production of *All My Sons* at Geffen Playhouse in L.A., she won permission to puke from director Randall Arney. For the climactic moment when Kate Keller reads her son’s suicide note, Arney said, “Laurie came to me with a twinkle in her eye and said, ‘Do you mind if I throw up a little in the hedge?’ She’s so good at finding an odd, funny way to expose a deep, deep hurt.”



JOAN MARCUS



BRIGITTE LACOMBE



BRIGITTE LACOMBE

“I try early on to look for unpredictable ways of attacking a line or a physicality that seem to work against maybe what your initial thought of the moment might be,” said Metcalf, who at one point in our interview got up to demonstrate a crotch grab she added to undercut one of Mary Tyrone’s tenderer monologues in *Long Day’s Journey*. “I just try to think outside the box from the very beginning.”

You might think that a taste for the extreme choice—“Go big or go home, that might sum up my approach,” she said—would make Metcalf a scenery chewer. No question she can command the stage, from her legendary 19-minute monologue as Darlene in Steppenwolf’s *Balm in Gilead* to Nora’s perorations in *A Doll’s House, Part 2* to the devastating theatre-scene-on-TV she did with Louis C.K. on “Horace and Pete.” And anyone who saw it still talks about a moment in a 2010 New Group production of *A Lie of the Mind* in which her character crawled across the stage with a pair of socks in her mouth, like a dog delivering a newspaper.

But in part due to her long years of working in an ensemble, there’s nothing self-aggrandizing about even her wildest gestures. “Size without bravura” is how her Steppenwolf colleague Austin Pendleton characterized it. “It’s size without an announcement of size.” Arney described it in terms of her against-the-grain acting strategy, the way she marshals emotional resources so that she’s “so full of whatever that character is, up to her ears, that it’s a process of pulling back to keep the lid from coming off. We end up watching these powerful moments in spite of the character. She’s pulling against an emotion the character doesn’t want to reveal—which makes sense, because we usually don’t want to reveal ourselves.”

In short there’s a method to the madness. All those counterintuitive instincts—what L.A. playwright Justin Tanner calls Metcalf’s

“perverse imagination as an actor”—are not mere quirks for quirk’s sake, but key signposts on her itinerary. “Sometimes it’s working backwards,” she explained. “If I know I’m in this emotional state for one part of the play, I think backwards to, where’s the furthest I can start away from it so I have the longest to travel?”

Maybe that’s why her characters’ journeys are so legible. Said Hnath, “She’s not content to be a passive recipient. There’s some part of her that restlessly tries to find the action that will help us see something.” Mantello echoed that, saying, “She makes thought athletic. When you’re watching her just sitting there, she’s never in repose, because she’s activating thinking. You watch her think.”

**“I’D RATHER BE BUSY THAN NOT. I’M HAPPIEST WHEN I’M** busy,” says the character Hillary in Hnath’s new play, set at a pivotal moment during the 2008 Democratic primary when her rival, Barack, has scored an upset in the Iowa caucus. Hnath insists that the play is set in an “alternate universe,” and that its Bill (played by

Metcalf on Broadway: With Bruce Willis in *Misery*, with Chris Cooper and Jayne Houdyshell in *A Doll’s House, Part 2*, and with Alison Pill and Glenda Jackson in *Three Tall Women*.

John Lithgow) and Barack (Peter Jay Fernandez) are no more supposed to be the “real” articles than is Metcalf’s Hillary.

“If I was asked to do an impression, I wouldn’t be cast in the play, because I can’t do it,” said Metcalf, not entirely convincingly. “I want to be as different as I can be, physically and vocally.” So she’s avoided studying videos of the real Hillary, she said. Of course, no sentient adult who lived through the last few decades needs to do research to access either of the Clintons’ faces and voices, and the play is banking on—and playing with—a similar availability in audiences.

“Sometimes it’ll be like, ‘Okay, I know who they’re supposed to be, and I’ve always wondered what they were like in a room together—but it’s *not them*,” said Metcalf. “It’s a weird optical illusion where the focus is gonna go in and out.”

Surely Laura Elizabeth Metcalf of Carbondale, Ill., feels some affinity for Hillary Diane Rodham of suburban Chicago? If not in her origins then in her destiny, as a fellow woman in a male-dominated field, frequently underrated, taken for granted, forced to perform in the shadow of men? Metcalf seems equivocal when asked, and not simply because Hnath’s Hillary isn’t supposed to be the “real” one. But Hnath could have written the line about being happiest when she’s busy to describe Metcalf, who admitted she doesn’t savor downtime between gigs, and whose supposed leisure activities are more intense than most paying jobs: Where some may take up knitting, for instance, Metcalf went so far as to shear and card

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## WINDHAM CAMPBELL PRIZES

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
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### DRAMA

Patricia Cornelius  
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Raghu Karnad

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Ishion Hutchinson  
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Recipients are awarded \$165,000 to support their writing.  
Prizes will be conferred at a ceremony and literary festival  
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# Daryl Roth Producing With a Purpose

AFTER 30 YEARS IN THE BUSINESS,  
WHAT ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL WOMEN IN THE THEATRE  
HAS LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

BY DIEP TRAN

## WAS THE TABLE OF TONYS THAT CAUGHT MY EYE. I WAS SITTING IN DARYL ROTH'S OFFICE IN MIDTOWN

Manhattan, a corner location with wrap-around glass windows and an enviable view of Central Park. There's a small, gold-accented telescope in one corner. And next to Roth's executive wood desk is a table with 12 Tony Awards lined up in neat symmetry. Not pictured: the seven Pulitzers gathered by plays after she produced them.

Given the accomplishments commemorated in that room, you might expect a towering, Miranda Priestly-like figure. But Roth is soft-spoken and genteel, the stark opposite of the manic high energy of playmakers à la *The Producers*. Her affability can almost make you forget that this is a person who has been called "one of the most powerful women in theatre" by no less than *The New York Times*, and who has an Off-Broadway theatre bearing her name (at which *Gloria: A Life* is playing through March 31). She's so polite that she asked me if I needed anything to drink, though I was already holding a glass of water in my hand. And when I asked her how long we had to talk, she said, "As long as you need."

But don't let the pleasant demeanor fool you. Roth is acutely aware of a few stark realities: that she's one of the few female producers on Broadway, that the work she chooses (by women, LGBT folks, and people of color) is not usually seen as commercially viable, and that not many people know exactly what a producer does. With 30 years of experience under her belt, she's used to people, including other artists, thinking a producer just "finds money and your job is done." She added, accommodatingly, "Which is one way to be a producer." That's not the kind of producer she is. "I've chosen to be an artistic producer, and very hands-on," she explained. In her case that means "finding the material I feel very strongly about, and being able to put together a creative team, being able to be involved in every step of the development."

Her producing career began in 1988 with *Closer Than Ever*, a musical revue with lyrics Richard Maltby Jr. and music by David Shire, which she first saw in cabaret form in downtown Manhattan, then helped develop at Williamstown Theatre Festival. "It ran for nine months Off-Broadway, which I like to say is the birth of a baby. It was my first theatre baby."

Since then she's had many theatre babies. She's helped develop more than 100 new works both on and Off-Broadway, as well as financing the next life of existing shows. A very short and incomplete list of works of Roth joints includes *Kinky Boots*, *Indecent*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Fuerza Bruta*, *The Normal Heart*, and *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*.

"I owe my career to her caretaking," Paula Vogel wrote in an email. Roth produced both Vogel's *Indecent* on Broadway in 2017 (which gave Vogel her Broadway debut), as well as *How I Learned to Drive* Off-Broadway in 1997 (en route to its Pulitzer). Added Vogel, "I respect her. I trust her. And I love her."

Roth is also the kind of civically engaged New Yorker who sits on the board of the New York City Police Foundation, Lincoln Center Theater, and NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio's Theater Subdistrict Council (where she recently help oversee an initiative that gave away \$1.5 million to female-led artistic projects). Oh, and she's also a Tony Awards voter.

The Daryl Roth Theatre off Union Square is a two-theatre complex Roth both rents out and uses as a playhouse for work she develops. *Gloria: A Life* began when feminist icon Gloria Steinem came to Roth looking for a female producer to help develop a one-woman show. Roth connected her with Emily Mann, who wrote the play, which has been playing to full houses since last October. Next at the theatre will be *Accidentally Brave*, written and performed by Maddie Corman (running March 11-July 14).



COURTESY OF DARYL ROTH PRODUCTIONS

Roth

"I've never watched the creation of a play before," Steinem wrote in an email. "I'm knocked out by the talent and hard work of women whose the life-blood of the theatre, yet whose talent and work the theatre often neglects."

### PRODUCING IS SOMETHING OF A

second career for Roth, who hails from a family in Wayne, N.J., for whom thea-tre-going was a regular pastime. Eventually she moved to Manhattan, married Steven Roth (chairman of Vornado Realty Trust), opened an interior-decorating business, and raised two kids ("I remember sewing costumes for *The Mikado* when [my son] Jordan was in 5th grade"). Then in her 40s, she realized it was time for a career change.

"I wanted to do something that would really fulfill me and would be in a world that I had loved," she recalled. In the theatre she saw an opportunity to craft a conversation. "I wanted to see more stories about women. My son Jordan is gay; I was interested in exploring those subjects. I wanted to do plays about my own Jewish identity. I wanted to do family stories. Those were the things that were personal and I was missing, so I thought maybe I could offer something new in that way."

She's done just that, from the unapologetically feminist *Gloria* to *Indecent* (about artistry and the intersection of Jewish and queer identity), to giving Larry Kramer his Broadway debut for *The Normal Heart* (about gay men living with HIV/AIDS; it won the best play revival Tony). Roth isn't afraid of work with political content, in short.

"You can look at it as being alienating but I think it's edifying," she said. "Yes, you can write about it in *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, but you're not experiencing it in the same way as you do in live theatre. Often I go to theatre and I don't agree with the point of view of the story, but I'll walk out having learned something." Theatre, she feels, should "give you something to internalize and then take out into the world." Though she's a commercial producer, she has something of an artist's sense of purpose.

"She checks her gut," Vogel wrote. "She runs the numbers, does the research, looks at every aspect of the business. She then asks, why is this play or musical important to do in this moment of time?"

Roth received her share of questions when she entered the male-dominated field of producing in 1988. "For many years people just thought, 'Who is this dilettante from New Jersey who decided she's a producer?'" Roth recalled.

Her son Jordan, currently president and majority owner of Jujamcyn Theaters, remembers those early years. "I think she felt a pool of skepticism, of being dismissed," he said, adding that the feeling of being excluded from the upper echelons of New York City money only further propelled her to open the doors to still more voices. "As she has moved toward the center of the industry," Jordan said, "I think she's very aware of bringing others with her who may be on the margins as they start out but deserve a platform, and deserve to be in the conversations."



The cast of *Indecent* on Broadway.

CAROL ROSEGG

Somewhat ironically, choosing to produce work seen as risky had its upside. For one thing it set her apart from other producers, because "there wasn't competition to obtain the properties," Roth said.

But while she had faith in her "mission," the thing that took time and perseverance has been finding co-investors and selling them on productions. To this day, asking for money is her least favorite aspect of producing. "I didn't have a lot of confidence in the beginning to raise money," she recalled with circumspection. "In the era I grew up in, you didn't sit around the dinner table talking about money. It wasn't considered ladylike." How did she do it? Theatrically. "When I would go to people and ask if they'd like to invest in the play or musical, I would pretend I was somebody else," she said with a smile. "I played a character. I played the role of someone asking someone for money. It's hard to do. And it still is."

The drive to prove herself as more than a "dilettante" may explain her hands-on producing style; she's not the type to just give artists money and walk away. "In my early days, I was there sweeping the lobby, handing out the playbills, and to this day I still hand out fliers for all my shows wherever I go," she said fondly.

Roth has also developed a keen eye. To wit: The musical *Kinky Boots* (closing April 7 after a successful six-year run) came about because Roth had seen the 2005 film at Sundance, then brought in Harvey Fierstein to write the book, who in turn suggested Cyndi Lauper to score. In those days "RuPaul's Drag Race" was still a niche television show, and drag queens were still largely fringe figures. So *Kinky Boots*'s stage success and Tony wins were hardly a given. "Nobody thought *Kinky Boots* would last," Roth said.

Playwright/director Emily Mann has crossed paths with Roth twice: Before writing the script for *Gloria*, she was the artistic director of McCarter Theatre Center, where *Anna in the Tropics* premiered before Roth optioned it for Broadway. Mann recalled that during the years-long development process for *Gloria*, Roth would give notes on everything from thematic elements to costuming. "She's as much a maniac about that stuff as I am," said Mann with a laugh.

Roth may be hands-on but she's not prescriptive. When asked if Roth ever had notes to make *Gloria* more commercial or audi-



AHRON R. FOSTER  
The cast of *Gloria: A Life*.

ence-friendly, Mann immediately said no. “She really supported what we were trying to achieve,” she said. “She let us use the language we thought was right, she let us tell the story we wanted to tell, she encouraged us to go deeper.”

**ONE STORY THAT'S BECOME BROADWAY LEGEND: IN JUNE** of 2017, poor ticket sales and tepid reviews led Roth to decide to prematurely close *Indecent* little more than two months into its run. Vogel recalled, “I will always carry with me the caring way she called me when I was in Barcelona to let me know, directly, that she had to close *Indecent*. Others might tell the news through email. But not Daryl. There was her voice, very direct, very regretful, letting me know that we would not be able to make it.”

The decision haunted Roth, leading her to tears and sleepless nights. “I would come home like a drowned rat, I was so sad,” she recalled. When her husband asked her what was wrong, she told him, “I know this is such a worthy play; I don’t know why people aren’t buying tickets.” Her husband asked if she would wager her *Kinky Boots* profits to keep *Indecent* open, and after some thought she realized the answer was yes. In a moment that could have come from a movie, Roth literally ran to the Cort Theatre, where *Indecent* was playing, three days before the show was set to close, ripped up the closing notice, and extended *Indecent* through Aug. 6 (another production was scheduled to arrive right after). Vogel summed up the moment: “Daryl Roth as Marvel action hero!”

The gamble paid off, and not just for Roth: *Indecent* sold out those extra six weeks, ended up breaking even, and went on to become the seventh-most produced play this season. Roth is confident licensing will yield profits. What this episode cemented for Roth was the power of intuition. Though she had no producing mentors, she has learned over the years to trust her instincts, even when it may mean a financial blow—taking on losses, for instance, to keep a show running long enough for word of mouth to form.

“I’ve always said to people, you can listen to all the good advice that comes your way and you can digest it and consider it,” Roth said. “But at the end of the day, you really have to trust yourself,

and no one will care as much about the project that you’re working as you do.”

**AS SOMEONE WHO PRODUCES BOTH** on Broadway and Off, Roth says that the decision to do something uptown or downtown is about scope; it’s not the size of the show but the size of the story. “It’s not a philosophical decision, it’s a practical decision,” she maintained. A majority of plays on Broadway do not recoup, so producing them Off-Broadway is a smarter decision financially and allows for more risk-taking. “The consideration for me is the story: Does it want an intimate setting, or is there a big enough story, or a big enough production, in what it’s saying?”

Might a little celebrity help? “These days more than ever you need a star to sell the tickets, and it’s just a fact of

life,” she conceded. For every non-star play like *Indecent*, Roth has also invested in guaranteed moneymakers, like being a second producer on the Bette Midler-fronted *Hello, Dolly!* Consider it diversifying the portfolio.

Does it bother her that women and people of color are still seen as a financial risk on Broadway? This season there’s only one new musical written by and directed by a woman (*Hadestown*). “I don’t want to judge anybody else’s tastes—people like different things,” Roth said diplomatically. “I know what my interests and tastes are. I want to be true to that.”

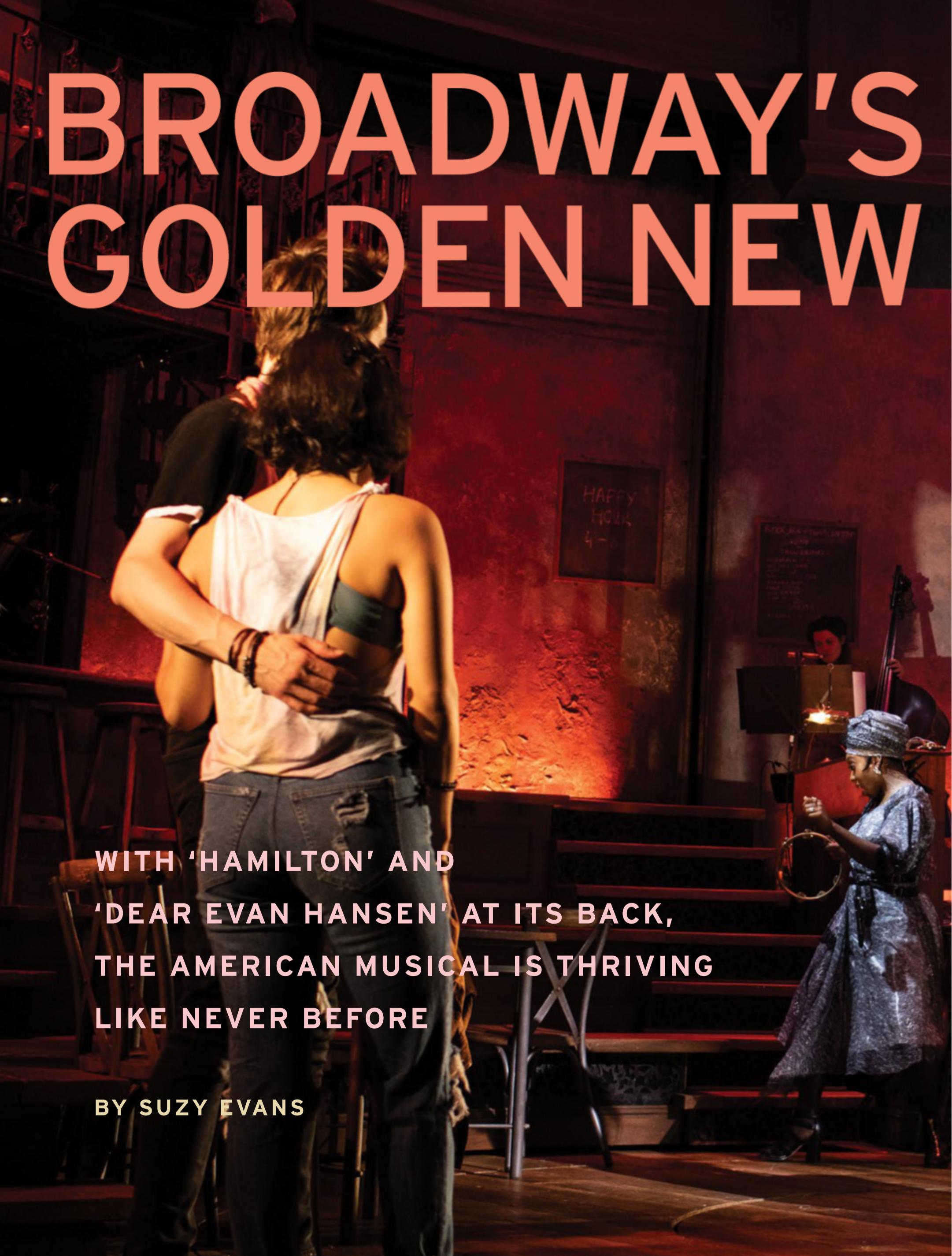
But as the pool of producers widens, she believes it’s “important for women producers to reach out and hire other women,” she said. “There are so many talented women designers, and unless producers are willing to go out and meet them, they’re not going to get their work out there. I think it behooves a woman producer like myself to bring those women into the room and to have their work be seen, and then have other producers know about them. I’ve tried hard to do that.”

She is also thinking about impact: How can theatre make a mark on the world? In cases where she’s the lead producer, Roth likes to match the play with an outreach effort. For *Gloria* she created the Hope-aholics initiative, by which the public can make a tax-deductible donation to underwrite tickets to the show for students; in five months, the Hope-aholics have sent more than 2,200 students to *Gloria* from schools in four states.

Looking ahead, she’s eyeing revivals of *How I Learned to Drive* and *Proof* by David Auburn (on which she was a secondary producer in 2000). Another concern: the lack of childcare in the theatre, which she believes impedes women’s careers. She’s currently on a Broadway League committee to find a solution for mothers working on Broadway.

As a certain Sondheim song has it, Roth is still here, but she’s looking to add a few verses. Thirty years and all those awards later, she still has more to give. With her characteristic mix of softness and determination, Roth concluded, “I want my legacy to be that what I did mattered.” 

# BROADWAY'S GOLDEN NEW

A photograph of a couple dancing in a dimly lit, warm-toned bar. The woman has her back to the camera, wearing a white tank top and jeans. The man is in a dark shirt and jeans, with his arms around her. In the background, a band is performing on stage, and a sign on the wall reads "HAPPY HOUR 5-7". The overall atmosphere is intimate and celebratory.

WITH 'HAMILTON' AND  
'DEAR EVAN HANSEN' AT ITS BACK,  
THE AMERICAN MUSICAL IS THRIVING  
LIKE NEVER BEFORE

BY SUZY EVANS

# AGE?



Amber Gray (right) and the cast of *Hadestown* at the National Theatre in London in 2018. © HELEN MAYBANKS

# A SCI-FI MUSICAL. A POP SHOW INSPIRED BY AN ancient story. An *Alice in Wonderland* with music. A blues-infused jukebox show. A stage adaptation of a wildly popular musical film.

Quick, name the year those musicals hit the boards. Is it 1982, when *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Blues in the Night*, and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* opened on and Off-Broadway?

Could be—but it also sounds a lot like 2019. This, after all, is the season that includes *Be More Chill*, *Hadestown*, *Alice by Heart*, *Ain't Too Proud*, and *Moulin Rouge!*. We can still describe the latest wave of musicals, it seems, the way we did more than 30 years ago.



Will Roland (center, above) and the 2018 Off-Broadway cast of *Be More Chill*.

MARIA BARANOVA

So how far exactly has the musical landscape and the form itself progressed in those decades?

Musicals have had “I want” songs and “11 o’clock” numbers since the days of Gilbert and Sullivan, and out-of-town tryouts, developmental workshops, and producer/writer partnerships have always been crucial to the writing process. But changes are afoot. The biggest of these changes comes, ironically, not from developments onstage but in film. The American musical has found its way back into the mainstream zeitgeist via such films as *The Greatest Showman* and *Mary Poppins Returns*.

In tandem with that on-screen renaissance, cast albums for *Hamilton* and *Dear Evan Hansen* are hitting the Billboard Top 20, marking the first time in 54 years—since *Hello, Dolly!* and *Fiddler on the Roof*—that two stage-born albums were in the Top 20.

“It’s a new golden age of musical theatre,” says Preston White-way, executive director of the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, which

has seen an uptick in the number of musicals submitted to be a part of its development program.

The breadth of topics that are viable for musicalization has also expanded, particularly recently, with more chamber-like works such as *The Band’s Visit*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and *Fun Home* being rewarded for their adventurousness with the Tony Awards’ top prize.

“The most amazing thing in my theatre-producing lifetime—even in my theatregoing lifetime—is the broad variety of different things that are now dealt with in musical theatre,” says producer Jack Viertel, who is credited with the initial concept for *The Prom*, which opened on Broadway last fall. While that show harkens back to the big, broad musical comedies of earlier days, it also boldly tackles topical and complicated issues, including high school bullying and

anti-LGBTQ prejudice. “It’s a contemporary story being told in a more traditional way, and it’s those two things combined that make it so interesting,” says Matthew Skylar, who wrote the show’s music.

Jennifer Ashley Tepper, who made her Broadway lead-producing debut with the sci-fi show *Be More Chill*, which opened in March, calls the trend “musical plays”—i.e., pieces that cover serious and controversial topics with music added. Not that there aren’t classic precedents for this, as Tepper—a self-styled Broadway historian—is quick to note. “The difficult-subject-matter thing is really a descendant of the Sondheim/Prince musicals,” she says. “*Pacific Overtures* and *Company* pointed the way so that musicals could be more topical.” (She might have cited far earlier examples, dating through *South Pacific* all the way back to the antiracism of *Show Boat* in 1927.)

Michael R. Jackson says he also looked to Sondheim, particularly *Company*, when crafting his self-referential meta-musical musical *A Strange Loop*, which premieres at New York City’s Play-

wrights Horizons in association with Page 73 in May (see p. 44). The show follows a Black queer musical theatre writer, working on a show about a Black queer musical-theatre writer, working on a show about...you get the point. “I wanted *A Strange Loop* to be a proper musical, but I also knew it was probably going to be what used to be called a ‘concept musical,’” Jackson says of the nonlinear story. “The challenge became to figure out: What is the form of this? How much of a book is there? What are the other characters, and how do they operate? It is about a character examining his own life in the moment.”

#### WHILE THE POP-INFUSED SCORE FOR JOE ICONIS'S

*Be More Chill* sounds very contemporary, Iconis says his musical—based on Ned Vizzini’s book about a high schooler so desperate to be cool he swallows a super-computer called a “quip” that tells him what to do—has antecedents in such classics as *Damn Yankees* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. That’s only to be expected, given that Iconis listened to nothing but cast albums until college.



Derrick Baskin, Jeremy Pope, Jawan M. Jackson, Ephraim Sykes and James Harkness in *Ain't Too Proud* at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles, presented by Center Theatre Group, in 2018.

“For me the idea of what good writing is is rooted in classic musical theatre—it’s just what feels correct and what makes sense,” he says. That said, he continues, “*Be More Chill* is very style-forward. It’s written with a nod to 1950 sci-fi movies and 1970s horror films, and to today’s pop music that feels very ‘synth-y’ and in-your-face. We call it a ‘maximalist pop fantasia.’”

On the other hand, singer-songwriter Anaïs Mitchell felt relatively isolated artistically as she composed her first stage musical, *Hadestown*, which opens on Broadway in April after a recent run at Britain’s National Theatre and a production at New York Theatre Workshop in 2016. Mitchell, who had begun a low-residency MFA program with a focus on musical theatre (unfinished to date) while writing *Hadestown*, says she felt a bit like an outsider to the theatre community—and she took strength from that feeling.

“A song, for me, is a circle,” she explains. “The verses and choruses circle back on themselves; there’s a suspension of time which

is very mystical. How to hold together these circles and lines is the thing,” she says of the way these self-contained creations live within a theatrical story. Her show, she concludes, “is just always going to be a different animal from most shows.”

Luckily Mitchell shared the journey with her director, Rachel Chavkin. The two met in 2012 after Chavkin helmed another form-breaking, forward-thinking musical, *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*, and began working together on *Hadestown* soon after. Chavkin, though steeped in theatre via her company the TEAM and no longer a stranger to musicals thanks to her work with composer Dave Malloy, including *Great Comet*, still counts herself a musical theatre newbie, saying she only recently saw *Wicked* for the first time.

“No single piece can be met with the same set of tools” as any other, Chavkin asserts. “There are obviously basic tools of leadership that transfer over, like a sense of innovation that I presume every director feels.”

As newcomers like Mitchell continue to make their marks on the musical, the success of Sara Bareilles’s *Waitress* has led other pop

writers to Broadway, from Eddie Perfect, who penned songs for *King Kong* and *Beetlejuice*, to Bryan Adams and Jim Vallance, who wrote the songs for *Pretty Woman*. This trend worries Lucas Tahiruzzaman Syed, co-editor of the new yearly periodical *Musical Theatre Today*, and himself a composer with a background in the concert world. While the influx of pop writers without musical training may broaden the possibilities of the form, might it also limit options for emerging writers, like Syed, who are dedicated primarily to the form?

“There are artists being invited into the fold for reasons that are often super valid, and they often produce really great work, but they are not tried-and-true musical theatre writers,” says Syed, who is part of the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, which along

with NYU’s Graduate Musical Theatre Writing program, is among the few programs centering on the craft of writing musicals.

Kathy Evans, who is founder and executive director of the upstate New York Rhinebeck Writers Retreat and was executive director of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre for nine years, also has a finger on the pulse of the field, and she sees the glass as more than half full.

“What’s been exciting to me is to just see how much the field has grown,” Evans enthuses, noting that her applications have tripled since she founded the Rhinebeck program in 2011, and that the number of theatres looking for musicals to produce has expanded. This demand means there may be room for all of the above—pop writers new to musicals, as well as dedicated musical theatre pros.

Another infusion of material comes courtesy of jukebox musicals, an ongoing trend with no end in sight; this year’s crowded slate, including *The Cher Show* and *Head Over Heels*, joins such long-run-

ning bio-musicals as *Beautiful* and *Jersey Boys*; *Tina*, based on the life of Tina Turner, now in the West End and eyeing Broadway; and the Temptations musical *Ain't Too Proud*, which opened in March. While the songs in these shows by definition aren't written for theatre, the books are, and this is another route by which new talent infuses the form. Dominique Morisseau penned the book for *Ain't Too Proud*, joining such old hands as longtime musical theatre librettists Terrence McNally and Marsha Norman as well as newcomers like Steven Levenson (*Dear Evan Hansen*) and Lisa Kron (*Fun Home*).



Above: Beth Leavel and Brooks Ashmanskas, center, and the original Broadway cast of *The Prom*. Right: Molly Gordon, Andrew Kober, Noah Galvin, Grace McLean, and the cast of *Alice by Heart* at MCC Theater.

"My hopeful prediction is that it will really push *story* forward," Morisseau says about the surge of playwrights working in musicals. But story in a musical doesn't necessarily come via dialogue, as Morisseau learned. "Just dealing with the scarcity of language in a musical was unique to me—I'm a very dense writer," said the author of *Pipeline* and *Skeleton Crew*. "I can write you a whole monologue, and suddenly it's like, 'Oh, no, wait—the *song* has to be the monologue!'"

**AIN'T TOO PROUD BEGAN ITS JOURNEY TO BROADWAY** at D.C.'s Kennedy Center in June 2018 and at the Ahmanson Theatre at L.A.'s Center Theatre Group that September. Most other Broadway-aimed tuners make their starts Off-Broadway or outside NYC. American Repertory Theater of Cambridge, Mass., is producing the new musical *We Live in Cairo* beginning in May, while *Paradise Square* played at Berkeley Repertory Theatre earlier this year; *Marie, Dancing Still* is at Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre through April 14; and *Benny & Joon* is at Millburn, N.J.'s Paper Mill Playhouse through May 5, after an earlier run at the Old Globe in San Diego.

With the opening of its new uptown space, NYC's MCC Theater has launched a new-musical development program called SongLabs, and has programmed the musical *Alice By Heart* (which runs through April 7), its fourth ever, penned by *Spring Awakening* writers Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater. Tom Kitt and John Logan's *Superhero* concluded its run at Second Stage in March, and another Manhattan troupe, Atlantic Theater Company, has *The Secret Life of Bees* opening in May.

This last company's Broadway track record is two for two (with best-musical Tony winners, *Spring Awakening* in 2007 and *The Band's Visit* in 2018). Atlantic artistic director Neil Pepe says the company's transition from ensemble-driven work on plays to new musi-

cals was organic. He also notes that costs are lower Off-Broadway, and that almost all the company's musicals have had funding from a commercial-enhancement producer. "From a philosophical mission point of view, the most important thing is that the artist and the piece are allowed to breathe and grow on their own terms," Pepe says.

Both *A Strange Loop*'s Jackson and *Ain't Too Proud*'s Morisseau stress the importance of diverse voices and writers entering the field, as both gender parity and racial diversity have been sorely lacking in the field historically, and right up to the present. Jack-



son made sure the actors who populate his cast all identify as Black and queer, and Morisseau hopefully cites a few Black female colleagues working in the form, including Lynn Nottage (*The Secret Life of Bees*, as well as the stalled Michael Jackson jukebox musical *Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough*) and Katori Hall (one of the writers of *Tina*). There's also Kirsten Childs, whose *Bella: An American Tall Tale* received a co-world premiere at Playwrights Horizons and Dallas Theater Center in 2017.

Musicals written by more diverse voices are particularly important for young people, as shows that do manage to make it to Broadway are usually directly minted into the repertoire and go on to be produced at community theatres and high schools, giving young people roles they can see themselves in.

Young people have also become tastemakers in a tangible way with the advent of social media, via Tumblr, YouTube, and Instagram (plus other digital platforms this non-teen writer probably doesn't know about). *Be More Chill* is Exhibit A: It premiered at Red Bank, N.J.'s Two River Theater to mixed reviews in 2015, then fell out of the pipeline until Ghostlight Records' cast album. Music videos went viral on YouTube, spawning a Tumblr following among young fans rivaling that of *Hamilton*, launching the album onto the iTunes charts, and spawning a spate of fan art and fan videos. These consumers of the show later converted into sold-out, screaming audiences for last year's Off-Broadway run, leading to the current Broadway run. The question now: whether these fans are in the Broadway ticket-buying demographic. How will the show fare at those prices?

Tepper points to *Rent* as a forebear, as a similar gateway musical, noting that the excitement from youth often spreads up to other age brackets. (She's even sent some *Be More Chill* fans home to listen to *Rent* to expand their musical knowledge.) "It's like Elvis. It's like

CONTINUED ON PAGE 66

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# The Long, Strange Flight of 'Mockingbird'

The new Broadway version, and its legal battles, are just the latest chapter in a long, tangled history of the popular novel's theatrical life



BY STUART MILLER

Jeff Daniels and Celia Keenan-Bolger (center) and cast in the Broadway production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

JULIETA CERVANTES

**T**O THE CASUAL THEATRE OBSERVER, A NEW stage version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, starring Jeff Daniels, with a script by Aaron Sorkin, burst onto Broadway last winter, selling out every single seat for every performance and shattering box-office records for an American play. More informed theatre mavens first heard about this new *Mockingbird* some months earlier, when it was reported that the estate of the original novel's author, Harper Lee, sued the production over playwright Aaron Sorkin's adaptation, only to be countersued by the show's producer, Scott Rudin.

Now, as the play is again making headlines for the controversial last-minute cancellation of *Mockingbird* productions around the country—effected by legal threats from Rudin's company, but with the silent backing of Harper Lee's estate—the classic novel's long, strange relationship with the theatre is finally coming to light.

The saga began shortly after Lee's first novel became an unexpected smash. Since its publication in 1960, the book has sold more than 40 million copies and won the Pulitzer, while becoming a (mostly) beloved fixture of middle and high school reading lists. It was also adapted into an Oscar-winning film written by Horton Foote, starring Gregory Peck. All the attention proved too much for Lee, who gave her last interview in 1964 and never published another book.

But in 1965, Christopher Sergel, a playwright whose family ran the play publisher Dramatic Publishing (DPC), asked for permission to create a low-profile adaptation for schools, who were eagerly requesting a stage dramatiza-

tion. The idea appealed to Lee, and in 1969 she signed on for Sergel's faithful adaptation. "Lee read and approved it, writing that it had her support for stock and amateur productions," said Chris Sergel, the playwright's grandson, who now runs Dramatic Publishing. (His grandfather was president from 1970 until his death in 1993.)

That agreement, *The New York Times* recently reported, also forbade any stagings of *Mockingbird* within 25 miles of major cities (those with a population of 150,000 or more at the time of the 1960 census) if a "first-class dramatic play" based on the novel were playing in New York or on tour. Though no such adaptation existed then, that language indicates that Lee believed Sergel's version to be distinct from any hypothetical professional production—a notion reinforced in *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee*, by Charles J. Shields, which says that around 1970 Lee's agent fielded a request to adapt Foote's screenplay for professional theatres. (That never happened, and Foote himself reportedly turned down several requests to try his hand at a stage version.)

Lee's belief that she had not approved a professional version makes sense, said Charles Towers, who would later direct regional-theatre productions in the 1990s. "Large professional regional theatres were in their infancy," Towers said, "and a world with 72 LORT theatres was not in anybody's mind" when she signed the deal.

Early on Sergel's play seems to have been done mostly in schools or by community theatres, but an uncredited version of *Mockingbird* began to surface at some regional thea-



T CHARLES ERICKSON

Olivia Scott and Matthew Modine in Hartford Stage's 2009 production.

tres in the 1980s. Then, in the mid-1980s, a professional production of Sergel's play toured Britain and played in London for months. This version made it to New Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse in 1991, with movie star George Grizzard as Atticus Finch, and got two reviews in *The New York Times* (one mixed, the other negative). In Shields's opin-

ion, this version "lacks nuance and is mainly the highlights of the book, meant for an audience familiar with the novel who want to see actors in the guise of Atticus and Scout."

It didn't seem to matter. Audiences loved Atticus and Scout in any guise. By 1994-95, Sergel's *Mockingbird* was done professionally 10 times across the country, which, per

*American Theatre*, made it the season's third most-produced play. It remained on the Top Ten list for three years and was again a fixture on the list from 2008 through 2016.

Meanwhile an amateur production of Sergel's script became an annual rite of spring at the courthouse in Lee's hometown of Monroeville (the fictional Maycomb was based on the town and the film recreated the courthouse), drawing vital tourist dollars to the town. Kathy McCoy, who as director of the town museum in the old courthouse hoped to use the money to restore the building, hit upon the idea of doing the first act outdoors to put the audience in the town itself, moving into the courtroom for the second-act trial, and selecting a jury of 12 white men (the only people eligible back then) from the audience at intermission.

She took this version to Chicago, Washington, England, and Jerusalem, recalling a memorable moment there in 1996 when the "jurors came backstage when they were sent to deliberate and were begging me to let them change the verdict, to stand up for Tom Robinson." (McCoy had to say no.)

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Just before that trip Lee wrote to McCoy, saying she'd heard the production would be reduced to vignettes. "I want to make sure you are doing the whole thing," McCoy said Lee wrote, adding, "I am glad you are going."

### MEANWHILE, THE PROLIFERATING

professional productions were evolving from Sergel's version. In the 1991 published version, he credited Chris Hayes, who directed the show's U.K. tour, and Robert Johanson at Paper Mill with helping it to its "final form."

But even that was far from final. In 1993, Towers was asked to direct the play by Ed Stern at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Towers, who didn't like Sergel's script, refused, but said Stern encouraged him to make the play his own. So he did, including switching the narrator: Sergel's 1991 version was narrated by the Finches' neighbor, Miss Maudie, but Towers gave that role to an adult Scout, a.k.a. Jean Louise, looking back on her childhood. Towers directed it three more times, and his version started making the rounds to other theatres. "Even before the Internet there were Xerox machines," he said, adding, "I never received any credit for my script work." (Still, there's a 2015 *Florida Times Union* article referring to a "stage adaptation by Charles Towers.")

Dramatic Publishing responded with a new Sergel version that cast Scout as narrator, which Towers said was a response to his version. "They needed to have a script that matched what was being produced in other places." (Chris Sergel would not comment, saying it was before he was an executive at the company.) By Towers's fourth *Mockingbird*, at the Huntington Theatre in Boston in 1996, the publisher was cracking down, and he had to restore some of Sergel's words. "Nobody wanted a brouhaha; they just wanted a production."

Towers said he was approached by Lee's agent in the late 1990s about creating a new version for the professional market, but Lee scotched the idea. He said the agent told him that Lee "wanted all the productions to go away. There was a sense that if she endorsed a new one, even if it was better, it would lead to more productions."

Added Shields, "She eventually resented anything that drew attention to her."

When Michael Wilson was artistic director of Hartford Stage, he made his own stab at *Mockingbird*. A close friend of Horton



DAVID HOU

The cast of the 2018 Stratford Festival production.

Foote (he met Lee through Foote), Wilson knew that directors of Sergel's version often lifted scenes from Foote's screenplay without acknowledging or compensating him. "I had this idea to rectify that," Wilson said. So he asked permission to adapt the screenplay for the stage, but Lee had a stroke in 2007, and when negotiations grew complicated, Wilson decided it wasn't worth pressuring her. Still, he was determined to honor Foote, so in 2009 Wilson licensed Sergel's version, embroidering it with parts of Foote's screenplay. Foote attended the first preview of the show, which starred his daughter Hallie, just weeks before he died. "It was great to have done it for him, to see this come full circle at the end of his life," Wilson says.

Others have sought the rights to create a new interpretation. Zak Berkman, producing director at Pennsylvania's People's Light, was especially keen to have a female playwright handle the adaptation. "It's one of the essential American works written by a woman," Berkman says, adding that he discussed it with Sarah Ruhl and that Lynn Nottage's agent was enthusiastic, though Nottage says she declined the opportunity. In any case, Lee wouldn't grant permission.

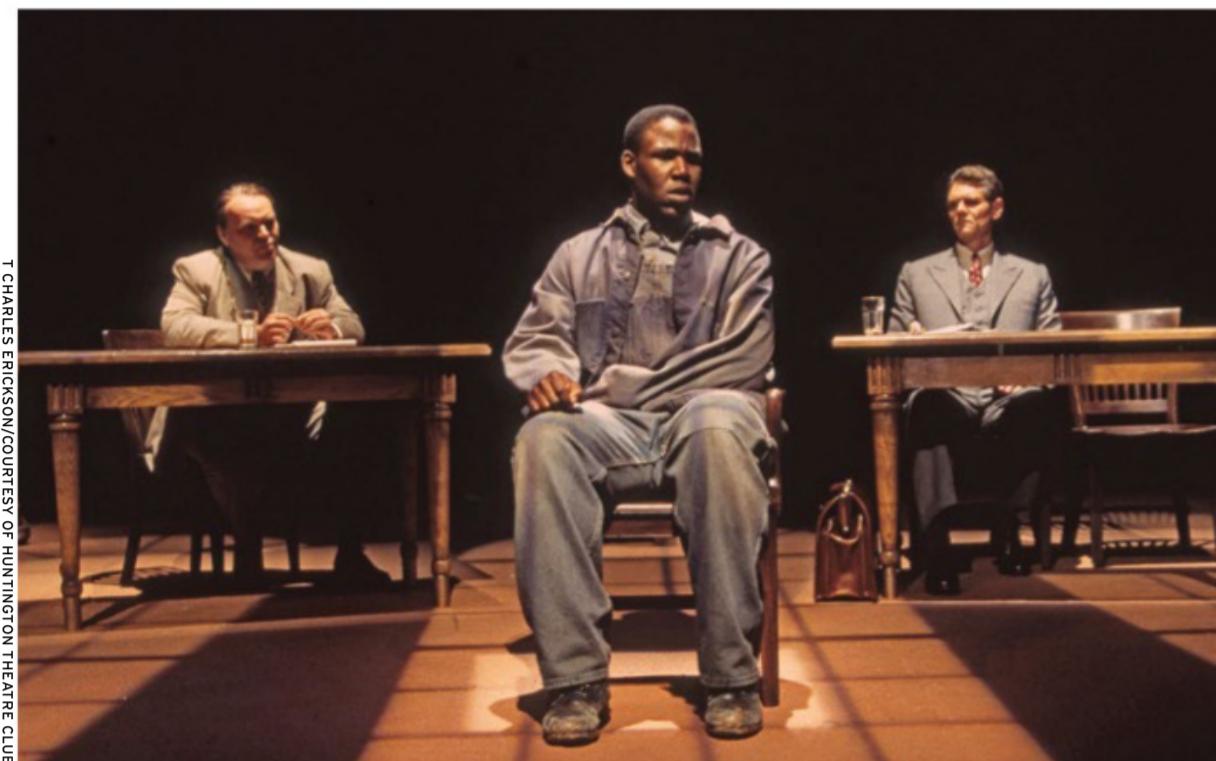
Nigel Shawn Williams, a Black Canadian actor and director, wanted to "focus on the racism and racial injustice," which he feels that Sergel's play "dilutes quite a bit." He asked for permission to create a new version, but after finding the Lee estate "very protectionist," he licensed the Sergel script for a production last year at the Stratford Festival, then blended bits from various Sergel

versions and found other ways to take it to a "darker and more political place than I've seen before," he said.

Williams's staging included photos and footage of lynchings and protests, and drew more focus to characters like Calpurnia, the Finches' housekeeper, as she reacted bitterly to the first utterance of the N-word. At the moment when it's revealed that Tom Robinson was shot in the back 17 times as he tried to escape prison, Williams's lights singled out the production's Black ensemble, who turned to the audience and screamed.

Meanwhile Rudin and Sorkin, at work on their own adaptation, tangled with Tonja Carter, who represents the Lee estate. Carter had already proved divisive in Monroeville, and her push to publish *Go Set a Watchman*—Lee's original novel, in which a less heroic Atticus is also an open segregationist—seemed unethical to some. It also seemed hypocritical that her objections to Sorkin's alleged departures from *Mockingbird* concerned humanizing Atticus. "The problem of two Atticuses was brought on by Carter—she brought out *Watchman*," Shields said.

After Rudin's countersuit, the settlement had Sorkin relenting on some minor issues (Atticus would no longer own a gun or drink liquor) while holding firm on major changes. (Carter would not comment for this story.) Sorkin restructured the play to introduce the trial immediately, using it as the story's framework to up the drama and shift some emphasis from the kids to Atticus. He also gave more voice and agency to Calpurnia and Tom Robinson, even at Atti-



T CHARLES ERICKSON/COURTESY OF HUNTINGTON THEATRE CLUB

Jack Willis, Danny Johnson, and Tom Stetchschulte in the Huntington Theatre's 1996 staging.

cus's expense. When Atticus interrupts Tom at one point, in full white-savior mode, Tom cuts him off and insists on being heard. And when Atticus insists that Jem apologize for lashing out at a racist neighbor, he explains to Calpurnia that he believes "in being respectful," to which she replies, "No matter who

you're disrespecting by doin' it."

**AS ITS MOCKINGBIRD SOARED ON**  
Broadway, Rudin's Atticus Limited Liability Company set out to enforce the terms of the 1969 agreement proscribing Dramatic Publishing's rights. A legal threat shut down

a long-planned tour of the Sergel-adapted *Mockingbird* in England. In early February Sergel was still claiming "this version is still available to many, many producers," and there were still two dozen community and professional stagings slated for 2019.

Then the hammer came down. Loraine O'Donnell, executive and artistic director at the Kavinoky Theatre, a professional theatre at D'Youville College in Buffalo, had purchased the rights from Dramatic in December 2017; when she heard about the Broadway version, she called to double-check the status of her license, and Dramatic assured her, "We have an agreement with the estate."

But on Feb. 20, 10 days before the Kavinoky's production was to open, O'Donnell was one of numerous U.S. theatres who received cease-and-desist letters from Atticus LLC. O'Donnell contacted Dramatic, which claimed the license was still legitimate but that they would not indemnify her production. (Sergel did not respond to phone calls or emails regarding any of the recent legal claims.) O'Donnell pleaded in vain with Rudin's representative, but her law-

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yers concluded they didn't have the time to investigate further, so she canceled the play, replacing it with *1984* (ironically, produced on Broadway in 2017 by Rudin).

John Fogle, artistic director of the Mugford Street Players in Marblehead, Mass., thought his theatre's amateur staging was in the clear. Nope: It was too close to Boston, a major city, during the Broadway run. After he got the cease-and-desist letter, he moved the production further from Boston, to Gloucester, where it opened March 29.

Most theatres weren't so lucky. A front-page *New York Times* story on Feb. 28 told of small theatres and child actors having their shows shut down and their hearts broken by a powerful Broadway producer. Though Rudin was cast as the heavy in these stories, in an interview he said this role should go to Dramatic Publishing, which was in violation of its rights when it licensed these productions. Indeed he said that his company "went to DPC six months ago, as soon as we heard about any of these licenses, and put them on notice that they were licensing productions outside of the specific provisions

of their contract. They chose to ignore the repeated notices we sent them. The bulk of their rights had expired, and they were left with only non-exclusive rights for amateur productions, provided they remain inside the legal mileage limit."

Why did Rudin go after the theatres rather than Dramatic Publishing? "We don't do anything about enforcing these rights issues without the estate's participation and consent," Rudin said, adding that the Lee estate has put Dramatic Publishing on notice "a dozen times" about their violation of the original licensing rights. He added that while Atticus LLC isn't in a position to confront Dramatic directly, the Lee estate—and the theatres who suffered losses here and in the U.K.—do have legal standing. Bottom line, Rudin said, "We're trying to address a wrong that wasn't done by us, and trying to lessen the hurt caused to these theatres by DPC."

Further assuaging the hurt, and countering the Grinch image created by the latest headlines, Rudin has offered any theatre who had licensed the Sergel version the rights

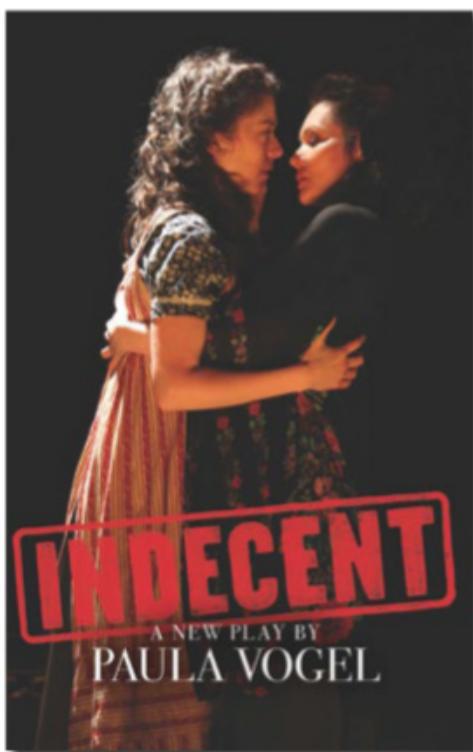
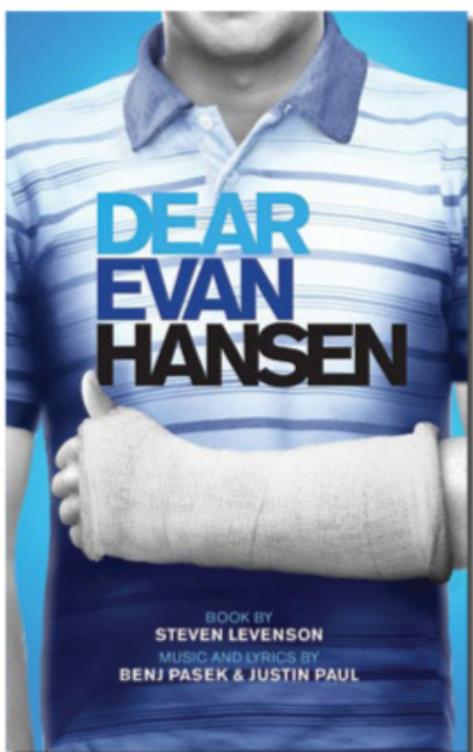
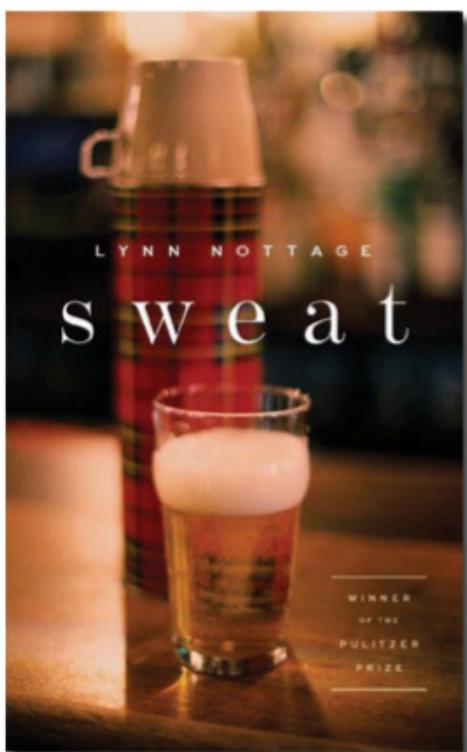
to Sorkin's instead—for free, and without a set time limit on when they can do the play. This gesture not only creates good will; it also effectively puts the final kibosh on Dramatic Publishing's long, lucrative hold over professional stage rights to Lee's novel. On DPC's website under "Performing Group" type for *Mockingbird* rights, it now lists only high school, college, and community theatre.

Viewed from a certain perspective, these *Mockingbird* battles are a testament not only to the enduring power of the book but to the power of theatre, Towers believes. "Whether it's Sorkin or Sergel or someone else, the play has always succeeded," he said. "We're all humbled by the majesty of this novel. When I was first asked to direct this, I thought, Why go up against that image of Gregory Peck? But the continued success of each version of the play shows that live theatre still matters—that live theatre still has its own power." 

**New York City-based journalist  
Stuart Miller writes regularly for this  
magazine.**

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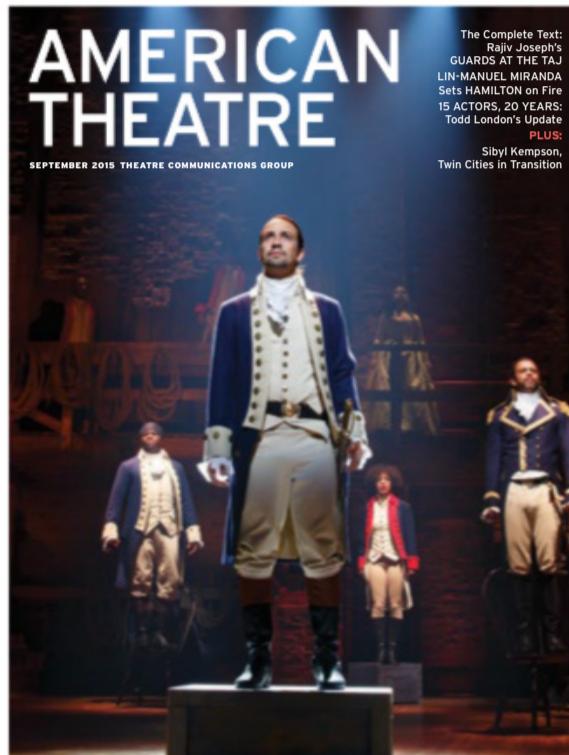
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# The Big Turnover



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## What should we expect from the U.S. theatre's field-wide changing of the guard?

BY DIEP TRAN

**S**INCE LAST AUGUST, HANA S. SHARIF HAS HAD two jobs. While finishing up her work at Baltimore Center Stage as its associate artistic director, every two weeks she flies to St. Louis to take meetings at, and plan a season for, the \$8.35 million Repertory Theatre, where she will start full time as artistic director in June. "I've learned how to sleep effectively on an airplane," she says with a laugh from her office at Center Stage.

Meanwhile the similarly sized Center Stage is going through a transition of its own: It also just got a new artistic director, Stephanie Ybarra, who moved into the job after seven years as a producer at the Public Theater in New York City. "We're living the same life," says Sharif.

The two had been friends before, but now, as both transition from supporting institutions to actually being the person at the top, they're stopping by each other's offices for advice (or simply to blow off steam) on a whole new level. Ybarra says she is keenly aware that she and Sharif are two of the few women of color to be leading multi-million-dollar institutions, not just in this moment but in American theatre history. And as first-time leaders in a field that till now has been dominated by white men (even though many of its founders were women), both Ybarra and Sharif admit to feeling the pressure not only to succeed but to transform the theatre field.

"My worst fear is letting people down, because the expectations are so high," says Ybarra. "I hope that I can live up to the revolution that people want, but it seems like a lot to carry." It helps, she says, to have company like Sharif: "I'm not carrying it alone."

Ybarra and Sharif don't just have high personal standards. The American theatre field is currently in the middle of a major, even epochal shift. Since 2015, 88 artistic directors of major theatres around the country, most of them Baby Boomers, have stepped down or announced their departure; and to date many have been replaced by a crop of 30- and 40-something artists, a sizable amount of whom are women and/or people of color.

Bay Area theatre directors Rebecca Novick and Evren Odcikin have been tracking the demographics of these new leaders since 2015. Their Google spreadsheet shows that out of 79 artistic director positions that have been filled, women now occupy 34 of those positions (43 percent, up from 24 percent). People of color now occupy 23 percent, up from 10 percent. In theatres with budgets of more than \$1 million, leaders who are people of color make up 21 percent, and those who are women make up 36 percent. At the time of this writing, 9 theatres are still seeking new leaders, most notably the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Actors The-

atre of Louisville. But it's safe to say that if artistic directors are in many ways the visible figureheads of their institutions, the very face of the American theatre is changing in front of our eyes.

"There's sort of a collective energy that's coming from the younger cohort of women and people of color coming into the positions," says Novick. "There's a lot of symbolic value and actual value, and there's a lot of energy and hope."

Those hopes are varied. One is artistic. As conversations around gender parity, diversity, and inclusion have heated up, artistic directors are increasingly expected to program seasons with these concerns in mind. Today a season of plays by all or even mostly white men is likely to be met with an uproar.

Another hope is around the audience. Much of the subscription audience that has till now sustained the American theatre is dying off, and there aren't as many younger people to replace them. According to a study last year from the National Endowment for the Arts, in 2017 just 16.5 percent of American adults attended a musical, and 9.4 per-

cent attended a play. That's actually a slight (1 percent) increase from the 2012 numbers, but these numbers are part of a larger downward trend over the last few decades. Audiences are still also alarmingly homogeneous: 78.6 percent of all play attendees were white, and 58.3 percent were over the age of 45 (the numbers were similar for musicals). So with competition from high-quality streaming television (a major employer of playwrights, in fact), what can live theatre offer to today's young, more diverse, tech-savvy audiences?

Then there's workplace culture. Recent years have seen growing calls for more equitable work environments. Today's artistic directors are no longer just fielding concerns about programming; they must also be able to have human-resource conversations with their staff about sexual harassment, childcare, and compensation.

In interviews with 12 incoming artistic directors around the country, a common theme emerged: Now is a moment full of great potential for change. As the nation's demographics are changing, can the Ameri-

can theatre start to look more like America? Relatedly, can it be made relevant to more Americans? Among the existential questions faced by the American theatre, this is a relatively new one. This new generation of leaders may have the answer.

### **ANSWER 1: Change Your Programming**

To understand this moment, it's best to go back to the very beginning (a very good place to start). By now the origin story of the American regional theatre is well known: Founded as an alternative to the commercialism and primacy of NYC, it was built so that theatre artists could make a living, and audiences could see world-class live performances, anywhere in the country. From that idea sprang the Guthrie, the Alley, Arena Stage, and many of the 50-plus-year-old theatres mentioned in this article.

The movement's founders were idealistic about art-making. As Margo Jones, one of the original stewards, wrote in her book/manifesto *Theatre-in-the-Round*, the whole point was to create "a permanent rep-



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With help from the likes of the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, these scrappy start-ups took root in their communities and grew into large institutions; some had shows go to Broadway, which gave them national clout and another source of income. Todd London, the editor of *An Ideal Theater*, a book about the founding of the American regional theatre movement, describes the 1960s, '70s, and '80s as "a period of institution building—you're building buildings and creating infrastructure and creating something that you want to last," he says. At the time, there was a "sense that this was a burgeoning field of promise and stability."

So much so that when the original founders like Zelda Fichandler (of Arena Stage) and Joseph Papp (of the Public Theater) stepped down, they were handing over multi-million-dollar institutions to their successors. The second wave of artistic directors included people like Carey Perloff, who stepped in to lead American Conservatory Theater in 1992. In her book *Beautiful Chaos*, Perloff wrote that her generation of leaders sat "somewhere between the visionary founders of the regional theatre movement and the often anti-institutional independent artists who have found homes either in the commercial or experimental theatre worlds in recent years."

For Perloff the focus of that second generation was on acting ensembles, new-work development, creating education programs to make up for the lack of arts education in schools, maintaining subscription audiences, and advocating for continued federal support. "We were not disillusioned enough yet to despair of institutions and to hold the nonprofit movement accountable for the lack of access and adventure in the field, a charge one hears repeatedly (and often fairly) today," she writes. (This complaint hit close to home in February, when a former ACT faculty member, Stephen Buescher, filed a lawsuit alleging he was the subject of racial discrimination during Perloff's

tenure; her successor, Pam MacKinnon, has been charged by the theatre's board to focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in every aspect of ACT's operations.)

Indeed today's leaders inherit many of the concerns of the generation they're replacing, and they have varying strategies for facing them. For many the answer begins with what's onstage. When we spoke, Marya Sea Kaminski was in the middle of her first season at the \$7 million budget Pittsburgh Public Theater, the largest theatre in the city. A newcomer relocated from a job at Seattle Rep, Kaminski started her first season with a bang: She directed an all-female *Tempest* and programmed Lynn Nottage and Kate Hamill, at a theatre that hadn't produced a play by a woman since 2014. Since coming in, Kaminski had to have what she calls a "big conversation" with the board about "diversity and representation in race and gender." For some the change has been too fast; subscriptions are down slightly. Kaminski sees it as a balancing act. "I feel a constant tension between incrementalism and disruption: how to best move forward, open up the doors wider, open up the canon, but also bring the community along, bring the audiences along who are not used to seeing that. I think it will be the greatest challenge I pursue in my lifetime."

For Rob Melrose, who recently moved from San Francisco to Houston to run the Alley Theatre (budget: \$19.5 million), the easy part is to "hire a lot of people of color and a lot of women," who he admits haven't been mainstays at the theatre. The harder challenge, he concedes, is to convince audiences who've never been to the Alley that the theatre is for them. "That takes a lot of outreach," he says.

Houston is 44 percent Latinx, yet the Alley has no Latinx members in its resident acting company and has not programmed a Latinx-authored production since 2011, effectively leaving potential money on the table. Melrose recently sat down with leaders in Houston's Latinx arts community for a "listening session" to learn how the theatre can better interact with that community. He also wants to make sure that if the Alley does start producing Latinx-focused work that they're not coopting efforts already being done by culturally specific organizations, as there's a perennial tension between predominantly white organizations and theatres of

color when the former swoops in and hoovers up funding for diversity efforts. "The idea is to keep a continuous presence so it doesn't feel like just a one-off," he says.

Melrose also notes that his predecessor, Gregory Boyd, had a reputation for being "shy" and reaching out only "to a select group of people." (Boyd's reputation was also dogged by accusations of harassment, amid a storm of which he left the theatre last year after running it for 28 years.) "I've had lunch with theatre leaders who never met him, never had more than angry phone conversations from him," Melrose says. Among the new a.d.'s goals are to hire more from the local talent pool and to create a network of local theatres that can educate audiences together. This echoes a theme that came up repeatedly in my reporting: the importance of teamwork.

## ANSWER 2: Change Your Outreach

In a time where social justice has become a foremost concern at many nonprofit institutions, the question for theatre leaders isn't just how theatre can survive, but what it can provide for the audience that no other art form does. What are the ways a theatre can give back to its community? And can the community be made to realize that the theatre is a place where they can invest their time and money? Some ambitious theatre leaders are wondering how the art form can bring together a nation that has become deeply divided ideologically.

One thing's for sure, according to Melia Bensussen: "We can no longer afford to have the perspective that because the work is good, the people will come." Bensussen will soon be the first woman to serve as artistic director of Connecticut's Hartford Stage (budget: \$9 million). In brainstorming about audience building, she discusses having more multilingual programming to attract Hartford's Spanish-speaking population, and instituting pay-what-you-can nights. She also sees the potential for the theatre to become a community center, where anyone is welcome anytime.

"We need to change the language, because when we say 'community center' or 'theatre for the community,' there's an expectation that artistic excellence is being pushed out of the equation," she says. "The notion of artistic endeavor and craft and

excellence is in *no way* hurt by prioritizing community access and involvement.”

A theatre’s integral relationship with its community is something David Ivers knows all too well. Ivers, who is currently relocating to Costa Mesa, Calif., to become the artistic director of South Coast Repertory, ran Arizona Theatre Company for a short, intense two years. He entered just as the company averted a shutdown; it had accumulated \$2 million worth of debt, which was then paid off in a subsequent fundraising effort. Ivers then helped the company fundraise to pay down half of its \$2 million deficit; subscriptions and single-ticket sales have since increased. What was gained from this near-death experience is “a two-way investment between the theatre company and the community, feeling that if Arizona Theatre Company closed its doors, what would be the loss? I think now the community can answer that. I’m not sure that they could before.” It probably doesn’t hurt, as Ivers notes, that free community events happen almost every night at ATC.

Ivers is hoping to build similar visibility

and buy-in at the \$11.3 million South Coast Rep, though it is more financially stable. One way to start: “I want to be the first artistic director that has the back of my kids’ soccer jerseys say ‘South Coast Rep,’ not ‘Dunkin’ Donuts.’ That costs like \$400. All of a sudden there’s an investment in a community that’s visible, and it’s about us investing too even though we don’t have those resources.”

Ybarra also sees her role at Center Stage as a community leader, and envisions the future of regional theatres as central civic institutions. “To the extent that regional theatres can extend their service beyond just theatre, and be active participants in the civic life of their communities—that’s the thing that raises all the boats,” she says. “That’s the thing that carries us into the future. We have to change the value proposition of our institution.”

While at the Public Ybarra was no stranger to the occasional enhancement-money-juiced property, her ethos echoes that of Public founder Joseph Papp, who wrote in 1958 that his theatre was built “on the bedrock of municipal and civic respon-

sibility, not on the quicksands of show business economics. I am interested in a popular theatre, not a theatre for the few.”

### **ANSWER 3: Change Your Culture**

There’s often a presumption that change can be easy, that all it takes is a new hire at the top and the change will magically trickle down. In a HowlRound post about this remarkable turnover moment, David Dower, of Emerson College in Boston, instead envisioned change as a collective effort: “The responsibility for the success (or failure) of a leadership transition is shared across the whole team,” Dower wrote. “The incoming person, the outgoing person, the board, staff, and funders all have significant roles to play.”

Caitlin Lowans had never run an institution before she took the helm of TheatreWorks, a \$1.9 million theatre in Colorado Springs, Colo., after its founder died. What she’s been learning in her time there has been that while there is an outward desire for a new path, sometimes a board’s eyes can be bigger than their stomachs.

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For example, when she first shared her ideas for the 2019-2020 season at TheatreWorks, there were “strong reactions on both sides,” from board members who were liberal and others who were conservative (Colorado Springs is a decidedly purple town); there was “excitement for the work, and also fear and sadness,” she says. (She also notes that the meeting was so intense that she felt like she “had to go away and have a stiff drink.” She then laughs, exclaiming, “Oh gosh, we’re on the record!”)

In the back of her mind is always the fear that things will go south, especially since Lowans previously worked in Chicago, where she watched Will Davis get appointed to lead the American Theater Company after its founder died, only to be blamed for the eventual demise of that company. She says she’s been training the board and the staff to think of TheatreWorks not so much as “Caitlin’s theatre” where she alone is responsible for change, but in terms of the question: “What do *we* want and what kind of work does TheatreWorks want to make? The idea of shifting people’s thoughts away from

‘one person equals the entire artistic organization’ to ‘there are many of us—we’re all serving a community.’”

As these institutions enter middle age, with multiple generations having led them, one trend that has emerged is a move away from the personality-driven model, à la Papp or Fichandler, to a more collaborative and democratic approach. For some in the field, this may denote a lack of vision or risk-taking. But for others, with the #MeToo movement in mind, an emphasis on consensus-building means there’s less room for abuse of power in the shadow of a cult of personality.

“I just have a very different idea of leadership than this outgoing generation, where leadership means there’s usually a white guy who has all the good ideas and he’s a genius and everybody is tasked with realizing his amazing vision,” says the Alley’s Melrose. “My view of leadership is that I’m a collaborator and I’m curious what other people think about things.” This isn’t surprising, given that Melrose formerly ran an ensemble-based experimental theatre, Cutting Ball.

If any of these leaders are worried about an uncertain future, they are not showing it (at least not on the record). They are clear about the time, space, resources, and collaboration they will need to succeed. They are intentional about making time to get to know their community and their staff, and to wait to discuss strategies and plans until those listening sessions are complete. They also know that change may move slowly—more slowly than they, or others, would like. “There is no way I can move forward without disappointing someone at some point,” says St. Louis Rep’s Sharif. “I have rid myself of the expectations there will be a sweet spot where everybody will be happy.”

In fact Dower warned that any theatre making a big change should expect an audience drop-off in the first year, calling it “a natural part of the process, not a referendum on the new person.”

Sharif is also aware of conventional wisdom that says an artistic director has three years to make an impression. And though there are many leadership success stories, there are just as many stories of breakups and bruised egos. What’s needed is the consensus that this is a long game and everybody has a stake.

“The expectation that we are the Avengers with our capes and superpowers, and we’re going to magically fix all of the deeply flawed structural issues of the American theatre is absolutely not realistic,” she says forcefully of the new wave of leaders. “What we have to temper is the timeline in which people expect us to do this work. If we’re going to talk about what concerns me the most, it’s not just what we’re expected to do but that somehow there’s a clock ticking. To shift the status quo and to crack it open and find answers to the structural issues, there will need to be innovative thinking, and there’s trial and error to that shit,” she says, pausing to chuckle at her choice of words. “We need the space and resources and capacity to do it.”

Maybe the pioneers had the answer all along. As Margo Jones once said, “Let us stir up the practical realization of a potential, of a dream, of an ideal!” May the practical realization begin. ↗

**Where do these new leaders want the field to be in 10 years? Read their answers on [americantheatre.org](http://americantheatre.org).**



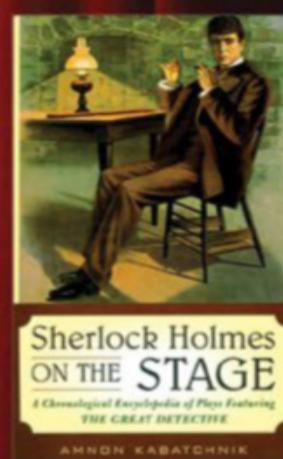
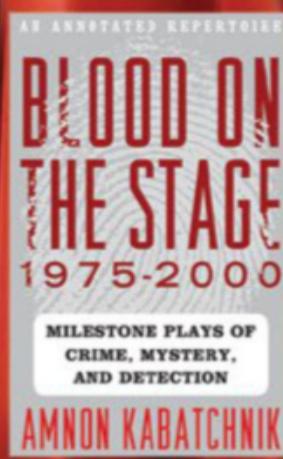
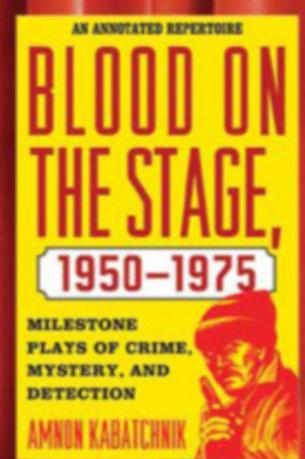
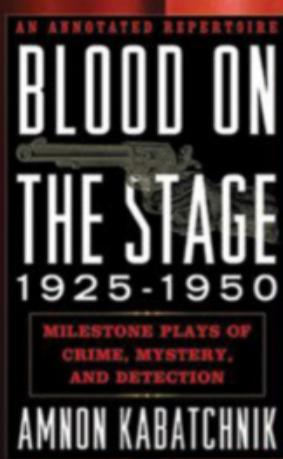
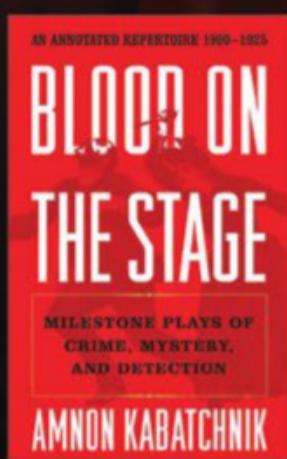
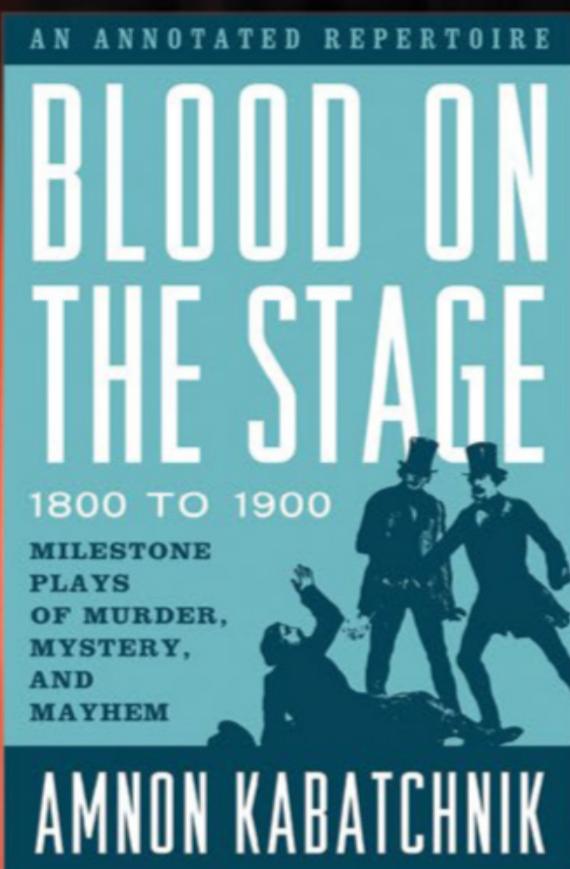
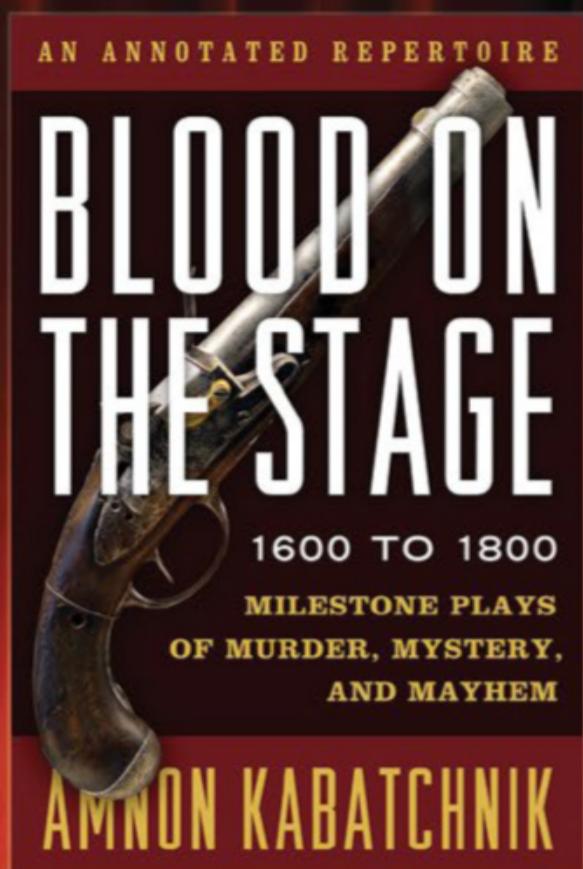
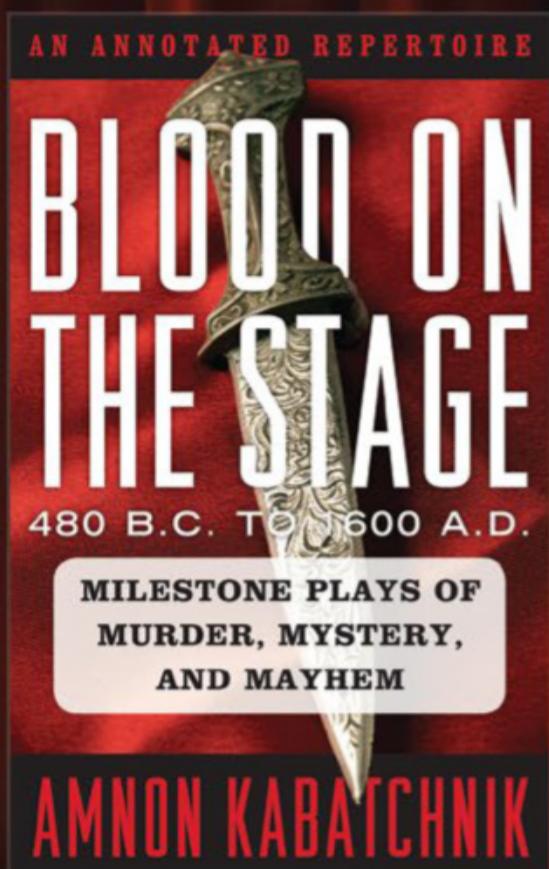
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# Michael R. Jackson

## What If

The form-breaking playwright/composer puts his work, and his audiences, through 'A Strange Loop'

BY SHOSHANA GREENBERG



Michael R. Jackson.

ZACK DEZON

**W**RITER MICHAEL R. JACKSON'S ARTISTRY draws from many influences: musicals he saw as a kid, politics, films by Todd Solondz, music by Liz Phair and Tori Amos. The list goes on. These are all in some way mixed into his evocative musical *A Strange Loop*, whose title is a sly reference to the show's premise: It's about a gay Black man writing a musical about a gay Black man writing a musical. It premieres at Playwrights Horizons in late spring/early summer (May 24-July 7), marking Jackson's Off-Broadway debut as a composer, lyricist, and bookwriter.

Jackson's narrative journey began with soap operas, a form he's loved since before grade school; as a boy growing up outside Detroit he watched them with his great aunt Ruth. Soaps weren't just a connection to his aunt but a fundamental building block of his aesthetic. "I love the form of melodrama," says Jackson during our conversation at the Pershing Square Signature Center's Signature Cafe + Bar. "It was helpful for other writing I would do later. I could always go, 'What if...?' because my brain was primed to think of stories as never-ending."

Like a loop, in fact. Jackson describes his new show as *Company* meets *Passing Strange*; it's not a traditional book musical with chronological scenes but instead depicts the experiences of a character trying to overcome his self-destructive tendencies. It began as a monologue he wrote after graduating from New York University's Dramatic Writing Program titled "Why I Can't Get Work." The character was basically him, "a young Black gay man walking around New

York trying to understand his own alienation, in real time," as Jackson describes it. Aside from writing, he was applying to graduate schools and jobs, mostly in soap opera writing, and decided he'd take whatever opportunity he got first.

He landed back at NYU in their Graduate Musical Theatre Writing program in 2003. He'd grown up playing the piano for church and making up songs but knew nothing about writing lyrics. He figured he'd better learn. He was admitted as a book writer and lyricist, but took an elective with songwriter and composer Mike Reid. At one point he heard a classmate say the phrase, "All those Black gay boys I knew who chose to turn their back on the Lord," and decided not only to set that line to music but to build an entire song for class around it. That song, now called "Memory Song," is in *A Strange Loop*.

Soon he began writing his own songs on the side, though he had no formal training in notation. He taught himself as much as he could, then found an essential collaborator in music director and arranger Adam Wiggins. In the 10 or so years they've worked together, they've developed a process by which Jackson prepares the sheet music to the best of his ability, then Wiggins polishes it and ensures it's playable. "Without that collaboration, I don't think *A Strange Loop* could have taken advantage of many of the opportunities it had," Jackson says.

Another early collaborator, Maria Manuela Goyanes, now the artistic director of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, directed some of Jackson's plays at the Rebel

Verses Youth Arts Festival, and they talked about how they might compile his multiple monologues and songs into a complete piece. One version had the main character, Usher (named after one of Jackson's previous day jobs: an usher at the New Amsterdam Theatre), who is obsessed with Liz Phair. Why her? Her 1993 album *Exile in Guyville* had stunned the teenage Jackson.

"I couldn't believe someone had written such an honest, funny, musically interesting self-examination of herself," he explains. "The whole album takes you on a journey." For one draft, Jackson wrote various mash-ups of his own songs with Phair's, the idea being that Usher was trying to talk to Phair through his music.

Jackson soon turned to Stephen Brackett, who had directed one of his Joe's Pub concerts in 2011. Brackett took to the show immediately. "I was drawn to the fact that it was so deeply personal and that it was a reflection of Michael on the page," he says. "But I could also feel the larger themes of isolation and having ambitions to change into a better person and artist, and strug-

**"I'm very grateful I saw the musicals I saw in my formative years," Jackson said. "I always thought that the point of musicals was to push the envelope and expand the form."**

gling with your family's understanding of your identity and feeling stuck in the body you've been born into."

He also made a suggestion that proved to be a turning point in the development of the piece: to cast only people who are Black and queer, from the main character of Usher to the ensemble, who depict Usher's thoughts. "That idea opened a door for me," Jackson says. "It made so much sense for the themes that were in the piece already."

A reading of the show illuminated another casting element: Usher struggles

with body image. In addition to a good actor, they needed someone overweight who would be able to both convey and understand that struggle. "All of that is part of Usher," Jackson says. "How he moves through the world and learns to accept himself in the body and skin that he's in. I wanted to make sure the actor who was cast was someone who could believably represent that experience." The part of Usher eventually went to actor/writer Larry Owens.

Jackson then met Shakina Nayfack, who was then forming the Musical Theatre Factory, an organization that helps writers develop new musicals, and she invited Jackson to bring *A Strange Loop* to the inaugural writers group. Nayfack also arranged a two-week residency and reading, which Brackett directed.

The piece began to move forward. After a successful concert at Feinstein's/54 Below, Kent Nicholson, the musical theatre producing associate at Playwrights Horizons, decided it was time for his colleagues to see the piece. Nicholson had first met Jackson around 2009; when he was forming a musi-

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Michael R. Jackson performing with Musical Theatre Factory at Joe's Pub.

cal theatre writers group at Ars Nova, he invited Jackson and Anna K. Jacobs, his collaborator on another musical, *Teeth*, to join. “It’s clear from the minute you hear [Jackson’s] work he’s got a really unique voice,” Nicholson says. “It’s personal, it’s thought-provoking, it’s political, satirical, heartfelt.”

**A READING AT PLAYWRIGHTS HAP-**pened a few days after the 2016 presidential election. “It was actually a blessing,” Jackson recalls. “The mood in the room was so dark, people were like zombies. This musical is a raucous, very honest, emotional, very Black, very queer thing that, in my mind, counteracted the darkness of the moment.”

From that reading producer Barbara Whitman became involved, and the play development company Page 73 came on board to help make the show happen. Page 73 artistic director Michael Walkup said he would have produced the show himself, but his small company did not have the resources. Partnering in a co-production with Playwrights Horizons became the way forward.

Walkup says that he looks for writers who examine their own lives for honest stories to tell, and *A Strange Loop* doesn’t shy away from dark racial and sexual material. “When I saw [*A Strange Loop*], I couldn’t believe the unflinching truths he was telling that on some level must have cost him to tell,” says Walkup.

Playwrights Horizons artistic director Tim Sanford had a similar reaction to the piece. “[Jackson] does not back away from really portraying Usher sunk in a deep pit of self-flagellation and despair,” he says.

Sanford could tell the piece was right for his theatre after seeing a pair of readings of it there. “It felt like he was in our space and among the people who had discovered Bill Finn and he was ready to be discovered,” says Sanford of the composer who premiered his trio of one-act musicals *In Trousers*, *March of the Falsettos*, and *Falsettoland* at the theatre between 1979 and 1990. “It felt like he wanted us to do it, and I wanted to do it.”

Jackson has since won the Jonathan Larson Award and the Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, and he’s been at work on *Teeth*, based on the 2007 horror film, with Jacobs, and *White Girl in Danger*, a melodramatic commentary on ’90s movies-of-the-week for which he’s writing book, music, and lyrics. These shows also reflect his early influences, particularly his first encounters with musical theatre.

When Jackson was growing up in Detroit, his mother took him to see the national tour of Hal Prince’s *Show Boat* revival in Toronto. It was the first time he’d seen a Black character in a musical confront injustice. “*Show Boat* took my breath away,” Jackson says. Though he has since spotted the show’s problematic aspects, he still looks to that production for showing him what musicals could do.

Another musical he saw in Detroit had a big impact on him. A production of *Raisin*, the 1973 musical adaptation of Lorraine Hansberry’s play *A Raisin in the Sun*, “made me flip,” he says, particularly the song “Not Anymore,” in which the Youngers explain how they were politely asked not to move into the white neighborhood. “I would put

that record on in my basement and listen to that song over and over,” Jackson recalls. “The craft of it, and the way it used irony, were big influences on my own writing.”

Seeing these musicals, as well as the experimental *A Chorus Line*, at a young age impacted how he viewed musical theatre itself. “I’m very grateful I saw the musicals I saw in my formative years,” he said. “I always thought that the point of musicals was to push the envelope and expand the form.”

Jackson also pushes the envelope on social media, where his usernames are often a variation on “The Living Michael Jackson” (in case anyone happens to confuse him with the iconic and freshly controversial late singer). His posts explore everything from national and local politics to the theatre, and they’re all written with his signature in-your-face honesty. One post on diversity, equity, and inclusion in musical theatre went viral. His take on the topic went beyond color-conscious casting to look at who was writing the shows and who was behind the scenes. Inseparable from Jackson’s aesthetic is his commitment to improving the politics of theatre, as well as the community surrounding it.

*A Strange Loop*, with its overweight, queer, Black protagonist, is an expression of this commitment. But Jackson doesn’t stop there: His latest preoccupation is the role class plays in the theatre ecosystem, particularly in excluding some communities from theatregoing. “It’s not just artists having this thing to offer the community,” Jackson says. “Maybe the community has a thing it can offer theatre.” You could call that an exchange—or perhaps a loop. ☑

**Shoshana Greenberg is a musical theatre writer, playwright, and theatre journalist living in New York City.**



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# What to Send Up When It Goes Down

BY ALESHEA HARRIS



AHRON R. FOSTER

The cast of *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* in the New York premiere production by Movement Theatre Company at A.R.T./New York Theatres, directed by Whitney White.

# A Black Gaze

An interview with the playwright

BY BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS



Aleshea Harris

COSTANTINO CIMINELLO AND ANDREW WOFFORD

*In a prologue to Aleshea Harris's *What to Send Up When It Goes Down*, a group of Black performers unapologetically announces that it is "for Black people." Framed as a kind of ritual, the show offers an array of scenes touching on police brutality, microaggressions, and racial resentment. First written and directed by Harris in 2016, it was mounted last fall by Off-Broadway's Movement Theatre Company to great acclaim. The author spoke about the play with fellow playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (Gloria, Everybody).*

**BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS:** Your other plays exist in a kind of hermetic space of "story," where Blackness is centered without self-consciousness and language is an important

force—not just in the way that people express themselves but in the way it literally gives shape to the playworld. *What to Send Up* works with similar methods but looks and *feels* very different. Was this formal departure conscious on your part?

**ALESHEA HARRIS:** I just wanted to do something that was activated, something an audience couldn't just passively experience. I knew this piece would have to do with Black people being killed by police officers with impunity. The idea was to hold people accountable, be confrontational, let it be messy, let it be angry, and let it tread as absurdly as the idea that a Black person could be killed on camera unarmed and the person who killed them get away with it. That is an absurd reality. I wanted to mirror that absurdity in the form of the play.

I also wanted to be really clear about rage, because rage and anger are central to a lot of my work. We're mad and we have a right to be mad, because the gaslighting of anti-Blackness is: "You imagined that." Or "It's really about economics, not race." There are so many ways people duck and dodge the uncomfortable reality that anti-Blackness is ingrained in the fabric of our country. I wanted it to be a no-gaslighting space. Black people feel however they feel and that's okay in this space, and should be okay in the world. And since I

am having a Black woman's experience as a human on this planet, I know very well that there's this stereotype, there's this mythology about Black women being mad. In order to challenge that, there's pressure from the community for us not to be mad, to be something else, to be a carefree Black girl. I'm not interested in being bound by either of those pressures/expectations. I just want to be my authentic self.

One of the moments in the show I can't stop thinking about was this exercise in the beginning when we have to stand in a circle and step in or out of it based on who had what kinds of personal experiences. I had this crazy moment when it got to the one about whether or not you've had a gun pointed at you by an officer of the law. I stepped forward, but I was one of only three people in the sold-out audience who stepped forward. And suddenly I felt this palpable gulf between myself and people that I knew. It was a pretty frightening experience in college that I'd actually suppressed, and it had never quite occurred to me to think about it in the context of anti-Blackness, probably because I got out of it relatively unscathed. But that moment in the circle to me was like: Oh my God, I'm experiencing the definition of catharsis! A thing is being brought up in me that I had buried that I'm now being given permission to meditate on and expunge! But then I wondered: Was my experience in that moment being categorized or demarcated as "essentially" Black in some way? Because a lot of Black people didn't step forward. It made me really interested in hearing you talk about your concept of Blackness. Do you believe that Blackness is a thing one

**ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT** Aleshea Harris is a playwright and performer who received an MFA from California Institute of the Arts where she subsequently taught in the School of Theatre for three years. Her play *Is God Is* won the 2016 Relentless Award, garnered her an Obie Award for playwriting in 2017, was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, and made the Kilroys List of "the most recommended un- and underproduced plays by women, trans, and non-binary authors of color" for 2017. *Is God Is* will be adapted into a film produced by Scott Rudin and A24. *What to Send Up When It Goes Down*, a play-pageant-ritual response to anti-Blackness, had its critically acclaimed NYC premiere with the Movement Theatre Company in November 2018. Harris has enjoyed residencies at MacDowell Colony, Hedgebrook, and Djerassi. She is currently under commission with Playwrights Horizons, Almeida Theatre, and Center Theatre Group.

**ABOUT THE PLAY** *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* was developed at Automata Residency Project in Los Angeles, Calif., in November 2015. It received its world premiere at Los Angeles's Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice on November 13, 2015. The director was Aleshea Harris. The stage manager was Anthony Dawahare. The cast was: Jozben Barrett, Dijon DeLonte, Anthony Graham, Rebecka Jackson-Moeser, Carissa Pinckney, Arielle Siler, and Carol Simon. It received its New York premiere at the Movement Theatre Company (Eric Lockley, Deadrie Harrington, David Mandizábal, Taylor Reynolds, producing artistic leadership team) at A.R.T./New York Theatres in New York City on November 11, 2018. The director was Whitney White. The scenic design was by Yu-Hsuan Chen, the costume design was by Andy Jean, the lighting design was by Cha See, the sound design was by Sinan Refik Zafar; the production stage manager was Genevieve Ortiz. The cast was: Alana Raquel Bowers, Rachel Christopher, Ugo Chukwu, Kambi Gathesha, Naomi Lorrain, Denise Manning, Javon Q. Minter, and

**chooses? Are the lines around racial identity very clear cut for you and very defined?**

The prompts invite people to step forward if they're Black *and* have had the experience described. Certainly, some Black people have been held at gunpoint by police and some haven't. When I think about Blackness in relation to this piece, I usually am thinking about what it means to move through space and be perceived as Black and the things that come along with that perception. But if I'm strictly using that definition, then people who are "passing"—it wouldn't apply to them, and it is wrong to deny them that. People self-elect in response to the prompts. It isn't my job to police anyone's identity.

**Without spoiling too much, this play ends with a kind of active divvying up of the audience along racial lines, but it doesn't seem interested in making a spectacle out of it. And I remember at the end a feeling of giddiness among everyone who was left in the theatre. Everyone became sort of silly and childish; it was actually very moving in some ways—its own kind of catharsis. I'm curious how that final gesture came to you. Is it something that came out of the rehearsals, or was it always a part of the writing of the piece itself?**

It has not always been a part of the piece. The New York production was the first iteration of *What to Send Up* where that has happened. I've mounted it maybe two or three times in California. I found that last moment with a nudge from this iteration's producers, the Movement Theatre Company. The idea was to make sure we were taking a specific space just for Black folks, a space that wasn't leaving the wound open. I wanted something around community and something around the kind of safety we can feel, the kind of giddiness you're describing when it's just us and it's about us. We have marginalized the thing that typically marginalizes us.

I was very conscious of the necessity of asking non-Black people to leave the space. I didn't want to make a performance of Black people through something for the viewership of non-Black people.

**That's such an interesting idea. I think I'm probably of that school that wonders about how Blackness as a concept is historically defined in proximity to Whiteness and vice versa. If there are a bunch of Black people in the room and there are no white people, are those people still "Black"?**

There's something about the way we breathe easy when it's just us. I think that it has to do with what you described, which is that suddenly, without white people, there's an absence of Blackness, and we get to be human in a different way. I think the piece is about our humanity.

I've asked myself again and again how the piece operates if there are no white people in the audience. Is it still useful? What does it become? I find that it is still useful, because the exercise of being together and saying these things, affirming one another, is very necessary. I know I need to refuel the tank sometimes.

**How do you refer to the "episodes" within the piece? You have this frame of ritual, but the content's almost like Grotowski or Reza Abdo on Black acid. (Is Black acid a thing?) How do you think of the characters Made and Miss and Driver? Are they characters to you or are they something else?**

I refer to the episodes as "movements," like in music. And the characters (i.e., Made/Miss/Driver) are being put on like costumes by Black people who need to do it in order to get free by the end of the piece. So I do a lot of telling the performers or the participants—sometimes I call them participants—that they aren't losing themselves in a character. There's a sheen and a commentary on this character that you are bringing with your body.

If we think about other rituals, like a preacher coming to lead a worship service, the preacher isn't pretending to be a preacher. They're *doing* that thing. They're preaching. What I was after was people doing things that were meant to bring something into being, which is what ritual is. At this moment I need to do this thing and say these words, so that by the end, I get to this space where I can dance with my people and feel free. ☒

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Beau Thom. It was produced at the Theatre at Boston Court in Pasadena, Calif., on August 21-23, 2016. The director was Aleshea Harris. The stage manager was Rebecka Jackson-Moeser. The cast was: Jonathan Bangs, Jozben Barrett, A'raelle Flynn-Bolden, Dijon Hawkins, Rebecka Jackson-Moeser, Carissa Pinckney, Gyasi Silas, Arielle Siler, and Shaina Lynn Simmons. The play has also been performed at the Costume Shop at American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, Calif., in November 2015, and Occidental College in Los Angeles in 2016.

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# What to Send Up When It Goes Down

## A play. A pageant. A ritual. A homegoing celebration.

### HOW TO READ THIS PLAY:

This play uses parody and absurdity to confront, to affirm, to celebrate.

The first section is a workshop carried out by the performers. It should be as informal and welcoming as possible. Feel free to improvise the language so that it feels natural.

The second section is experienced more traditionally, with the players presenting memorized text for any observers.

The margins are a space on the periphery of the main playing space. Whenever a figure “disappears” it is into the margins. That is, they remain but are barely visible.

The goal is healing through expression, expulsion, and movement. Have fun but don’t play.

### CAST:

All Black. There may be doubling.

**ONE/MADE** (W)

**TWO** (M)

**THREE** (W)

**FOUR** (W)

**FIVE/MAN/DRIVER** (M)

**SIX/MISS** (M)

**SEVEN** (M)

**EIGHT** (W)

Gender breakdown indicates what has happened in prior productions. These roles may be performed by persons of any gender identity.

### FIRST MOVEMENT

*Ideally, anyone viewing the ritual is waiting outside of the playing space. Four will make the following announcement:*

**FOUR:** Welcome everyone.

I’m (Name) and on behalf of everyone involved I’d like to say that we are really pleased that you’ve decided to join us. I’d also like to clarify a couple of things before we get started so that everyone understands why we’re here. According to studies, Black people in America are more than twice as likely to be killed by police as white people.

This concerns us.

The officers responsible for these killings often go unpunished.

This concerns us.

Black people must contend with living in a country which continually marginalizes and actively oppresses them. The emotional and physiological toll of this concerns us and is the reason for this ritual.

Let me be clear: this ritual is first and foremost for Black people.

Again. We are glad non-Black people are here. We welcome you but this piece was created and is expressed with Black folks in mind. If you are prepared to honor that through your respectful, conscientious presence, you are welcome to stay.

Parts of the piece you’re about to experience are participatory. Whether or not you choose to participate, be respectful. We are very serious about honoring real people who have died and offering strategies for those who need a way to heal.

Please also note that it is not often that Black people have a safe, public space for expressing their unfiltered feelings about anti-Blackness. We are taking that space today.

Thank you.

*As the audience enters the space, they are each offered a black ribbon to pin to their clothing.*

**TWO:** Welcome everyone.

The black ribbon symbolizes our grief. If you’d like a ribbon, please take one, put it on and get into a circle.

If you are someone who is unable to stand for long periods of time, raise your hand and we can grab you a chair.

*Once everyone is settled, it continues.*

**TWO:** Thank you for joining us.

What we are about to carry out is a ritual honoring those lost to racist violence. If at any point during this ritual you find you don’t wish to do something that’s been asked of you, please step out of the circle.

We ask that you don’t disrupt those participating in any way.

Let’s start by sharing our names with each other. The way we’re going to do it is whoever has this (Name of object—perhaps a candle)

speaks their name, then passes it on to the next person who speaks their name when they’ve got it.

*This happens.*

**TWO:** Nice to meet you all.

We are here because many of us have been killed, but today in particular we’re honoring (*Insert name of person recently killed*) who was killed on (*Insert date of killing*).

(*Name of deceased*) was killed by more than the hands of (*Her/his/their*) killer.

(*Name of deceased*) was killed by an idea.

We think it’s important to honor (*Name of deceased*) and to acknowledge that although (*Pronoun*) was killed by this idea, (*Pronoun*) was a person of value.

(*Name of deceased*) lived for (*Age of deceased upon death*) years. Let’s honor (*Pronoun*) by speaking (*Pronoun*) name once for each year (*Pronoun*) lived.

One

(*Name*)

Two

(*Name. Others will join. This continues until the number of years the person lived has been reached*)

This idea, which we believe is partially responsible for the death of (*Name of deceased*), is pretty pervasive in our culture.

It’s so pervasive that I’m sure there’s someone in this room who has heard someone say something anti-Black.

I’d like us to really consider that.

If you’ve ever heard someone say something racist about Black people firsthand, please step into the center of the circle

*This happens.*

**TWO:** Good. Try and have a moment of awareness about who around you has stepped forward and who hasn’t as we go through this exercise. Take a moment. Good. You can step back.

If there’s anyone here who has ever seen someone be denied something: a promotion, an opportunity to speak, or acknowledgment, for example.

If you feel you’ve ever witnessed someone being denied something because they are Black, please step forward.

*This happens. A moment of suspension, time to reflect on this.*

**TWO:** Good.



B. JUSTINE JAIME

The cast of *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* in the Theatre at Boston Court, Pasadena, Calif., production, directed by Aleshea Harris.

Now, anyone who has ever felt they themselves have been denied something because you are Black, an opportunity to speak, a fair contract, proper medical care, please step forward. *This happens same as before.*

**TWO:** Now, let's talk about physical safety. Has anyone here ever seen someone physically threatened or assaulted and feel that it was because they were Black? If so, step forward. *This happens same as before.*

**TWO:** If you've been physically threatened or assaulted and you believe it was because you are Black, step forward.

Now let's get even more specific, since the use of weapons by officers of the law has been such a big part of the conversation lately. Have you ever seen someone be threatened or actually attacked by an officer of the law with some kind of weapon, a nightstick, a taser, pepper spray or a gun and believe they wouldn't have been treated this way had they not been Black, step into the center.

You can step out.

Now if you yourself have been at the other end of a nightstick, pepper spray, a gun being wielded at you by an officer of the law and feel that being Black had something to do

with it, please step into the center.

You can step out.

Now, let's each share one word that describes how we feel in this moment. It can be any word you'd like to share. We'll go around the circle passing this (*Name of object*) again. Speak your word when it comes to you. Feel free to say "pass" if you wish. *This happens.*

**TWO:** Let's sit with that for a moment.

Now, we'll do the same thing, but this time we're going to share with each other a word that describes how we'd like to feel in this moment. We've said how we feel, now let's say how we would like to feel.

*They pass the object speaking their word.*

**TWO:** Good.

Now, again, we're here to do many things, including celebrate the inherent value, the humanity of Black people since we are quite often dehumanized.

With this in mind, we'd like to extend an invitation to you.

Anyone here who feels they have some kind words they'd like to share with a Black person living in an anti-Black society, take a moment to write them down.

Take a few moments to do this. Please be respectful. Do no further harm.

If you don't want to or can't for any reason, no one will give you a hard time. We invite you to use this as a time for quiet reflection with yourself. Once you've finished, please place them in this receptacle (*References receptacle*). *They're given time to do this. Someone comes around with pens/small bits of paper and a bowl. The notes are dropped into a receptacle.*

**TWO:** When I get frustrated about these things, I find it really helpful to let it out with a yell. So, right now we're going to share a group yell as a strategy for releasing some of our negative feelings about the untimely death of (*Name of deceased*) together as a community. It can last as long as it needs to. As long as one of us is yelling, it's still happening. You can even take a breath and keep yelling if you need to. Close your eyes. On the count of three. One, two, three...

*Group yell happens. A beat after.*

**TWO:** Good. Breath is a great equalizer, isn't it? We all need to take it to stay alive. Each of us is making use of it as I speak these words. Right now as a community unique to this very moment, let's take a collective breath on the count of three.

One, two, three.

*They do.*

**TWO:** Let's do that again.

*They do.*

**TWO:** And one last time.

*They do.*

**TWO:** Now, some of us are going to continue with another part of the ritual but we need your help getting there.

In order to launch us into the next part of this thing, we need song, a bridge between this moment and our next.

You could think of this song as fuel.

We're going to teach it to you and we hope that you'll join us in singing it.

Here we go.

*Eight teaches song.*

**EIGHT:**

SUN COME UP  
SHINE ON ME  
CAN'T STOP IT  
FEELIN FREE

AND I GOT THAT LOVE  
FROM BELOW AND ABOVE  
FROM THE LEFT AND RIGHT

ON EVERY SIDE

WANNA THANK YOU  
WANNA THANK YOU  
WANNA THANK YOU...

*Once it's been learned decently...*

**TWO:** Good, we've got it down.

Now, let's join hands and sing it all together as a way to honor (*Name of lost one*), our community and our cause.

*They sing through it maybe twice. As everyone sings, the members of the ensemble begin to drift away from the circle one by one, preparing for the next part of the ritual. When it feels right, Two speaks...*

**TWO:** Let's keep singing as we make our way to our seats.

*Once the viewers are seated, Two resumes.*

**TWO:** The People are coming because it is the day after or the day before it has gone down.

You know what I mean by "it," right?

"It" equals some terrible thing.

Some "bang-bang" thing.

Some wrong color thing.

The shit that don't stop.

Since it don't stop  
we are always before and after it going down.  
You feel me?  
It happened yesterday and it will happen

tomorrow

We find ourselves between the happenings.

Stay with me.

It is the year (*Insert date and year*) and we are right here in (*Name of theatre/space-side of town*). But it is of also circa 1900, in some unknown city in these united states, what's left of the unknown "Negro" propped up in an old wooden chair the insides of his head outside the outsides of his head caved inside and it is also May 16th 1916 in Waco, Texas, the smell still smelling and it is of course September 30th 1919 in Arkansas, the screams still slicing through the air.

You get the picture.

The shame of the picture, plus the fuckery of shit having gone down and the knowing that it will go down again will not allow for the mincing of words or giving of too many fucks about delicate sensibilities or convention. It don't make sense, so why should it make sense?

On your marks

Get set

Bang!

*Eight beats a rhythm into her chest as she sings.*

**EIGHT:**

MAMA HAD A ROSEBUSH IN THE  
GARDEN

DADDY HAD A SHIP THAT SAILED  
THE SEA

I'M LOOKIN ALL AROUND FOR  
WHAT I'M HOLDIN  
DON'T SEE NOTHING BUT ME

ME ON THE SIDEWALK, ME ON  
THE FENCE

AM I GOIN CRAZY, IT DON'T MAKE  
NO SENSE

SEARCHIN FOR THAT GARDEN  
UNDERGROUND

WENT HUNTING FOR THAT HIDDEN  
TREASURE—ALMOST DROWNED

MAMA WHERE'D YOU HIDE THAT  
ROSEBUSH

DADDY WHY'D YOU SINK THAT SHIP  
I GOT NOTHIN TO PUT IN MY

JEWELRY BOX

AND I'M FEELIN A LITTLE SICK

**ALL:**

O

**EIGHT:**

MAMA WON'T YOU TAKE MY  
TEMPERATURE

DADDY WON'T YOU FILL THIS SCRIPT  
TRYNA GET WELL, TRYNA GET WELL  
BEFORE I ABSOLUTELY LOSE MY

**ALL:**

SHHHHHH...

Shh sh sh

Shh sh sh

Shh sh sh

*The performers hurriedly go to their places in the margins.*

*Meanwhile, the actors portraying Made, Man and Miss transform into their respective characters. Made wears an apron, Man wears a limo driver's hat. Miss may put on a hat and pearls, etc. The tempo of "Fixing Miss" must be clipped. Vaudeville-esque.*

**TWO:** The People prepare to say what needs saying.

**MADE:** Fixing Miss: A play within a play.

Characters: Made, that's "M-A-D-E": a woman of her own devising. Made stands at a table sharpening a knife.

**MAN:** Man. A man weary of the margins. He stands at attention.

**MISS:** Miss enters. She is white and has a Southern dialect not unlike Paula Deen's. She is old and generally jittery.

**MAN:** As soon as Miss enters, Man becomes Driver, breaking his stillness to tend to her. Driver performs Miss's favorite Negro dialect:

**DRIVER:** Miss, Miss, whatchoo need, Miss? I gotchoo, Miss. Anythang you missed, Ima get for ya, Miss. Whatcha need?

**MISS:** I don't need anything from you. I am wealthy and white and liberated. My hands are clean.

I am wealthy and white  
So wealthy and white that I don't need anything from you.

**DRIVER:** But...uh, Miss, I'll do anything for to make you happy! Thas what I'm here for!

**MISS:** O, hush up.

**DRIVER:** I needs me some purpose, Miss.

**MISS** (*Enjoying this*): O, stop.

**DRIVER:** I could frame ya, if ya want. Black is a real good color for a frame. I can do anything to make ya feel good about yoself. It'd be my privilege—

**MISS:** "Privilege"? Don't you start about privilege. Why, I've worked for everything I've ever gotten.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm...what I mean is I'm real happy to be some kinda vehicle fo yo edification. I needs my purpose up in this here play, otherwise I'm jus gon slide right offa the character list and into the margins, and I doan wanna do that!

**MISS:** Not my problem.

**DRIVER:** I means it, Miss, I means it! Gimme somethin to do!

**MISS:** What you do with yourself is none of my concern. My hands are clean.

*Driver bends over backward.*

**DRIVER:** I'll bend over backward! See! See! See!

**MISS:** You are making a fool of yourself—  
*Driver begins to slide into the margins.*

**DRIVER:** Please! Please! I'm bein sucked into the margins, Miss!

*Miss watches him go. A moment. Then.*

**MISS:** O, alright. Come on back.

*Driver is back in a flash.*

**DRIVER:** Thank you, Miss!

**MISS:** I spose I could use a seat.

*Driver happily gets on all fours. She sits on him.*

**MISS:** But don't think this means I need you. I can get rid of you whenever I please. You are a luxury.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm.

**MISS:** My hands are clean.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm.

**MISS (Quietly):** You don't steal, do you?

**DRIVER:** No'm.

**MISS:** Good. Calling you out for stealing would make me look mean and racist and I am neither mean nor racist. What I am is wealthy, white and liberated.

**DRIVER:** 'Course you is.

**MISS:** My hands are clean.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm.

**MISS:** Now take me over to the maid.

**DRIVER (Forgetting "Negro dialect"):** Shall I sing a Negro spiritual as I do?

**MISS:** What?

**DRIVER:** Shall I sing a—

**MISS:** I don't understand a word you're saying.

**DRIVER (Back to "Negro dialect"):** I mean, you be wantin me to sing one of my colored songs, Missus, while I be carryin you around? We real good at makin music!

**MISS:** No. Your shucking and jiving and driving are sufficient.

**DRIVER:** He carries her to Made

**MADE:** Who is still sharpening the knife.

**MISS:** What are you doing?

**MADE:** Kneading flour.

**MISS:** O. Making fresh bread, are we?

**MADE:** Yes, we are.

**MISS:** Hm.

*She taps Driver and he carries her away.*

**MISS:** Did you hear that?

**DRIVER:** Yes'm.

**MISS:** She was a bit impudent, wasn't she?

**DRIVER:** Yes'm.

**MISS:** And I'm not entirely sure about that bread she's making. I am gluten-free, you know, and I am certain she is not taking care to remove all of the gluten.

**DRIVER:** You prolly right.

**MISS:** You can't pull one over on me. I am a

friend to your kind but that does not make me a fool.

**DRIVER:** No'm. It don't.

**MISS:** That look in her eyes was very telling.

**DRIVER:** What did it tell you, Miss?

**MISS:** Something about fire, a schoolhouse and ghosts. That mean anything to you?

**DRIVER:** No'm. But—

**MISS:** I try to understand the struggle. I see the movies. I saw the *Django Unchained* and *The Help*, *The Butler*, the *Selma*, the *I Am Not Your Negro* and the *Black Panther* to boot.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm—

**MISS:** And I have Black friends. We're friends, aren't we?

**DRIVER:** Tha besta friends. You lets me listen to all your troubles.

**MISS:** You are not slaves. You work of your own free will.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm. Y'all let us do whatever we want. White House or jailhouse or—

**MISS:** Your choice.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm. And issa privilege to be up under you—

**MISS:** What's that? Privilege? I am not some trust-fund ninny I have worked for everything that is mine privilege had nothing to do with it! Now take me over to the maid! I want to non-racistly assert myself as her boss but not as a racist.

**DRIVER:** Yes'm. Dis here yo story—

He carries her over to Made.

**MADE:** Who is now loading a bow and arrow.

**MISS:** Hello there.

Hi.

Hi?

*Miss looks to Driver for help. He shrugs.*

**MISS:** How-what-how's your day going?

**MADE:** Fine.

**MISS:** What are you up to?

**MADE:** Laundry.

**MISS:** O. That's nice.

Why are you doing laundry at this hour?

**MADE:** Why not?

**MISS:** Well, it's a strange hour for laundry. Wouldn't you like to take tea with me? We could talk about our kids. I'm sure they've got lots in common.

**MADE:** I don't have any kids.

**MISS:** Really?

**MADE:** Really.

**MISS:** Are you planning on having—

**MADE:** If you don't mind, I'm needed doing this laundry.

**MISS:** Well. I do mind. I'm trying to have a conversation with you. Get to know you. You've been employed here for quite some time and I think we should become acquainted, so put that laundry down and let's talk.

**MADE:** We can talk but I can't stop with this laundry.

**MISS:** Fine. Well. I'll start.

I enjoy brunch. And church and my work, which is the care of children. All kinds of children.

You?

Ahem.

What do you like—

**MADE:** I really don't want to mess up and put the lights with the darks. If you'll excuse me.

**MISS:** I—I—okay.

*Pats Driver who takes her away.*

**MISS:** I am troubled. This is troubling. I think I'll have to let her go.

**DRIVER:** O.

**MISS:** What?

**DRIVER:** Huh?

**MISS:** You—

**DRIVER:** Whah?

**MISS:** What's that?

**DRIVER:** Nothin—

**MISS:** Well?

**DRIVER:** Naw—

**MISS:** I—

**DRIVER:** Nuh-uh—

**MISS:** What do you mean by saying that? Am I to keep an insolent worker?

**DRIVER:** No'm, but—

**MISS:** Am I to put up with someone who can't be bothered to make friends with me? I do wonder what, if you'll pardon the expression, crawled up her butt!

I am a friend to you all but that does not mean that I have to tolerate sass!

I non-racistly assert the right to have whichever colored maid I like!

**DRIVER:** Yes'm.

**MISS:** What?

**DRIVER:** Nothin.

**MISS:** Do you—

**DRIVER:** No'm—

**MISS:** What's that look about? I don't owe her anything.

Take me back over there right this instant!

**DRIVER:** You da boss!

**MISS:** Wait! I'm not going anywhere.

Ahem.

You. Maid. What are you doing?

**MADE:** Made is oiling a machete. She does not even look at Miss

*(To Miss) Sweeping.*

**MISS:** Put down that broom and come here.

**MADE:** I'm needed sweeping.

**MISS:** You are needed where I say you are needed I can do my own sweeping I grew up doing my own sweeping I never needed anyone to do it for me I grew up poor You are a luxury My hands are clean Please come

over here.

**MADE:** Made goes to Miss, hips first.

**MISS:** Your sass of late has become too much for me to handle. It's just gotten out of hand. Too much Way overboard. Have you got anything to say for yourself?

**MADE:** Made answers with her shoulders.

*A shrug.*

**MISS:** Are you going through some sort of private crisis—

**MADE:** Nope.

**MISS:** If you were having some issue—

**MADE:** Nope—

**MISS:** I understand and am sympathetic—

**MADE:** No issue—

**MISS:** Maybe one of your kids is sick—

*Made slaps Miss.*

**MADE:** Made slaps the shit out of Miss.

*Miss continues as if she hadn't noticed.*

**MISS:** Maybe one of your kids is sick and you're needing some time off—

*Made slaps Miss again. Again, Miss continues as if she hadn't noticed.*

**MISS:** You're needing some time off to tend to your little ones. I can understand that.

**MADE:** I don't have any fucking kids you witless cunt!

Made punches Miss.

*Punches but Miss isn't affected. She shakes her head, confused.*

**MISS:** You seem upset.

**MADE:** Made cannot stop hitting Miss.

*Miss looks to Driver—who shrugs his shoulders.*

**MISS:** You must be having a bad day—

*Made kisses Miss squarely on the mouth. Miss mimes the actions as she describes it, dying a hilarious, dramatic death:*

**MISS:** Miss is horrified, reacts as if she's been shot, stabbed, punched. She screams, moans, and rages, ending up on the floor.

You—

You—

You! Are! Fired!!

*Miss is very still.*

**MADE AND MAN:** O. shit.

*Three enters from the margins with a bowl filled with shredded white paper. She drops bits of the paper on the ground as she speaks, moving throughout the space.*

**THREE:** Do you remember when I tried to love you?

You and you stood with me in a circle at a party on a boat, in a roaring house by a fire in a log cabin and we breathed the same air but not really yours seemed bigger and though I stood with you and you in that tight circle you and you let a truth tumble out of your mouth

which put me in Africa with a bone in my nose doing a nigger dance which put me in The Ghetto looking suspicious and being suspiciously quite nigger-ly you and you put me beneath your boots or in the cupboard or in the corner of your eyes, platoon, spelling bee—

*Four and Eight appear. They are standing in a bathroom mirror at a bar.*

**EIGHT:** So, I tried to, like, be cool about it, you know.

Ever since I read that psychotherapy book, I'm all into my breath and checking in with my body and stuff, you know?

**FOUR:** I feel you.

**EIGHT:** But he was pissed. You know that really special nobody-ever-dares-call-me-on-my bullshit, especially-not-some-Negro-wench way white men get pissed?

**FOUR:** I know it very well.

**EIGHT:** So, I'm going in like I do, tryna explain things calmly, you know—

**FOUR:** O, Lord. What'd he say?

**EIGHT:** He looked at me and said...

He doesn't see color...

*They freak out, running all over the room, laughing. Maybe they "shout," à la a person stricken with the Holy Ghost. Twerk incredulously. Some amused/shocked expression of "Lord, help me not to slap somebody."*

**FOUR:** No the hell he didn't.

**EIGHT:** Yes the hell he did.

**FOUR:** No, his ass didn't.

**EIGHT:** Yes, his ass did.

**FOUR:** What'd you say?

**EIGHT:** I didn't say anything.

**FOUR:** Nothing?

**EIGHT:** What could I say?

**FOUR:** I can think of a few things.

**EIGHT:** Nah. I'm tired. I just politely leaned forward in my chair...

**FOUR:** Mm hm.

**EIGHT:** and took his mouth.

**FOUR:** What?

**EIGHT:** Off his face. I removed his mouth.

**FOUR:** You took his mouth off his face?

**EIGHT:** Yes.

**FOUR:** You removed your coworker's mouth from his face?

**EIGHT:** I did, indeed. From right between his nose and his chin.

**FOUR:** You removed your white coworker's mouth—Girl-what-how-how?

**EIGHT:** I just...

*She demonstrates snatching a mouth off of someone's face with one hand.*

**EIGHT:** Now he out here mouthless.

**FOUR:** Giiirrrrrrrrrl—

*Six rises, no longer Miss. He and Five—no longer*

*Man—speak:*

**FIVE:** Why do you keep fucking with these white people?

**SIX:** What do you mean?

**FIVE:** You fuck with them.

**SIX:** I fux with everybody.

**FIVE:** You tryna be funny?

**SIX:** Maybe.

**FIVE:** Do you want to die?

**SIX:** C'mon—

**FIVE:** You do, don't you?

**SIX:** Is that a real question?

**FIVE:** You have a death wish.

**SIX:** Suicide by white person. Is that a thing?

**FIVE:** I'm serious.

**SIX:** Chill, bruh. They fuck with me and I respond in kind.

**FIVE:** If you don't want to die, quit responding! And quit walking down the street.

**SIX:** You don't want me to walk down the street?

**FIVE:** No.

**SIX:** I can't walk down the street?

**FIVE:** No, you can't.

Especially not with the way you walk down the street.

**SIX:** The way?

**FIVE:** Yes, the way.

**SIX:** And what way is that?

**FIVE:** You know.

**SIX:** I don't. I'm curious. Like, how do I do it?

**FIVE:** Brazenly.

In their neighborhoods.

Brazenly!

You know they hate that.

**SIX:** But show me though.

Show me how I do it.

**FIVE:** You do it all like this.

*Five imitates Six walking down a street. It is a normal walk.*

**SIX:** Like that? That's how I do it?

**FIVE:** That's exactly how you do it!

**SIX:** O, 'cause I thought I was more like...

*Six does this ridiculous pimp-daddy walk, complete with gang signs and maybe even ends with a jailhouse pose.*

**SIX:** I thought that was how I did it.

**FIVE:** No, no. You definitely do it like this:

*Five demonstrates the normal walk again.*

**FIVE:** And then you be all like, "Hi." Like that. Like y'all are pals.

**SIX:** We're not pals?

**FIVE:** No. You and white people are not pals.

**SIX:** Homies?

**FIVE:** No.

**SIX:** Confidants—

**FIVE:** God. No!

**SIX:** Alright! Damn.

*Seven appears.*

**SEVEN:** Daddy used to say, “(Name of actor), you don’t get to be foolish, too, boy.

You already Black. Don’t add Fool to the equation.

Foolish Black folks get swept off their feet in the worst way.

Foolish Black folks get cheated out of their own skin and bone.

Foolish Black folk come to this world like rabbits and get taken out like trash.

Black and foolish is the last thing you wanna be. You can be uppity, you can be stoic but you bet not, bet not be foolish.”

So, Fool ain’t in me.

Uh uh.

It ain’t in my food, my walk or my attire. You will not find Fool in the gin I drink, under my fingernails or in my speech. Let them be foolish

I am very Black and very much the picture of perfection

I keeps it sharp.

If you say you seen Fool anywhere on (Name of actor)’s person, you. a muthafuckin. lie.

*Four enters the space holding the bowl of white shredded paper.*

**FOUR:** When I say “Black people,” I want you to say, “yeah.”

Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL:** Yeah!

**FOUR:** A lot of times when people call your name like that, a lot of times when they say “Black” they’re saying something bad about you.

Am I right, Black people?

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Big Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Loud Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Angry Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Stupid Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Ugly Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Poor Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Criminal Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** AIDS-havin Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Fat Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Lazy Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Ghetto Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Urban (Black people)

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Sassy Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Entitled-ass Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Not even worth mentioning Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Synonymous with “slave” Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** You best behave Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Dead Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Dead for bein Black Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Your bodies are dangerous Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** You are walking weapons Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** You got some weight on you Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** You ready to unpack Black people?

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Drop somethin!

*They drop bits of paper slowly as Three enters, dropping more paper.*

**THREE:** You lookin at me like “what”?

You lookin at me like “whoa”

Like “whoa” Like “what” Like “whoa”

What

What

What

When so many words are fighting their way out of my mouth

that it foams

You and you don’t want to listen to the words themselves

preferring, instead, to ponder the foam’s density and viscosity like,

“Where did it come from? Why she so mad?”

Well, I just don’t know.

I guess there was a sale on Mad down at the Mad Store

So I went down and bought me some Mad

And, here it is.

Meanwhile, I and I can’t find myself in the mirror, in the reflection of the screen

unless of course I am biting myself

You and you approve of the biting of the self especially when it is a self that looks like me

You love it, O, you love it when I bite myself because that is the kind of Black story you like.

When I am heavy and downtrodden with biting myself

when I wear the flavor of Blackness you like

When it is warm and fuzzy Blackness that does not creep under your bedroom door at night

Blackness that doesn’t disrupt brunch or make you question

the things your privilege steals and steals from me

O, you love it

You wield your pen

I blubber most Blackly

You nod your head, you know this story

I weep, I moan, I reach for you from down below

You love it

You wield your pen most bravely

You are afraid to come to my neighborhood

You would never help my aunt with her groceries

You do not see me coming

but you come see my story

You sit in your soft chair

You review me and you do not feel the foolishness of it

You feel no shame

You really think you are in charge

I’d be embarrassed for you if I weren’t so busy fighting for my life

If I were to turn my teeth toward you

If I were to turn my teeth toward you

You and you would not know what to do and do

Do you do you

Do you remember when I tried to love you?

Do you remember when I tried to love you?

It was like riding a bike without a chain.

**FIVE:** Brazenly.

**SIX:** What?

**FIVE:** You walk around in their neighborhoods.

Brazenly!

You know they hate that.

**SIX:** Not their neighborhoods.

Not their streets.

Everything they got, they stole.

Streets and people

Streets and people

But they ain’t got me.

**FIVE:** If they got guns, they got you.

**SIX:** Naw.

**FIVE:** The judge and the senators they got—

**SIX:** Naw.

**FIVE:** The police, they got.

Time and the law, they got.

They got you.

**SIX:** Naw.

**FIVE:** You keep on. You’ll find out.

**SIX:** Whatever.

*Six makes to leave.*

**FIVE:** Where you going?

**SIX:** To one of “their” houses.

**FIVE:** Don’t be stupid.

**SIX:** Gotta take a leak. Gonna water the azaleas.

**FIVE:** That isn’t funny.

Stop laughing.

**SIX:** A brotha can’t even laugh?

**FIVE:** You don’t have to do it the way you do it

In their faces

loud and wide

showing all your teeth

you laugh like—

**SIX:** You’re right, I do.

But those crackas deserve it.

**FIVE:** O my god, you must really want to die.

**SEVEN:** So when they shoot another one of us, I come up with a plan.

I get a razor and cut a straight line, not too deep, just deep enough to do the trick.

I cut from the navel to the sternum and then two more lines from the sternum out to the shoulders.

A “Y”

like how they cut the dead ones open.

I figure if I already look dead, there ain’t nothin for them to kill.

Iss like playin possum.

You see? Sharp.

*Eight and Four still before the mirror:*

**EIGHT:** Don’t look at me like that.

**FOUR:** A white man’s mouth? Just...just like that?

**EIGHT:** Just took it off his face.

**FOUR:** O my god! Was anyone else there?

**EIGHT:** O yeah. Other people were there. My supervisor’s jaw hit the floor. They got all wide in the eyes, like “(Name of actor)’s gone crazy.” I put that mouth in my purse and left.

**FOUR:** No one tried to stop you?

**EIGHT:** Now you know good and well they were scared.

**FOUR:** What does it look like?

**EIGHT:** Like a little fish flopping around. Look. *She opens her purse but not for long, lest the mouth jump out.*

**FOUR:** That’s disgusting.

**EIGHT:** I know. It won’t shut up, either.

**FOUR:** What’s it saying?

**EIGHT:** The usual. Something about my neck.

**FOUR:** They’re gonna come after you.

With fire, they’ll come.

**EIGHT:** And I’ll be here with this mouth.

Let ‘em come.

**FOUR:** Girl.

**EIGHT:** Tired.

**SEVEN:** I strut down the street with this “Y” so neat and pretty lookin like a muthafuckin superhero.

Don’t need no cape or nothing.

Naw, don’t need no cape.

All I gotta do is—shit.

*Seven smarts. A sharp pain from the “Y” on his chest.*

**SEVEN:** The fuck?

**THREE:** I and I beamed my least nigger-ly smile and offered you a beer

and you took the beer but would not let our fingers touch

I pretended not to notice—

bigger-ing my non-nigger smile but you got scared

or horny.

You told me, you tell me a story

about someone you love who hates me.

You say,

“My uncle is a bit racist but you must understand that he is from a different time.”

And so the arrowhead is in me

not you nor your uncle

me

I try to take it out gingerly—I try

This is an office function, after all

It wouldn’t do to walk around with an arrow in my back—

**SEVEN:** This ain’t my Y. This Y’s got fresh blood. And it feels like I’m all hollowed out—

**THREE:** Arrow in my back—

**SEVEN:** Iss enough ghosts up in here.

*All take an audible breath and run to the margins, save for Two, who speaks to the audience.*

## SECOND MOVEMENT

*This second time around, all action occurs a bit more quickly than the last time.*

**TWO:** The People are coming because it is the day after or the day before it has gone down.

You know what I mean by “it,” right?

“It” equals some terrible thing.

Some “bang-bang” thing.

Some wrong color thing.

The shit that don’t stop.

Since it don’t stop

we are always before and after it going down.

We find ourselves between the happenings.

Stay with me.

It is the year (*Insert date and year*) and we are right here in (*Name of theatre/space/side of town*).

And it is also July 19th 1935 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the little girls chewing taffy and watching the swing, swing, swing.

And it is also June 16th 1944 in Columbus, South Carolina, the boy going into the death house.

And it is of course August 28th 1955, the Tallahatchie River fuller than usual.

You get the picture.

The shame of the picture, plus the fuckery of shit having gone down and the knowing that it will go down again will not allow for giving of too many fucks.

It don’t make sense, so why should it make sense?

On your marks

Get set

Bang!

**EIGHT:**

ME ON THE SIDEWALK, ME ON THE FENCE  
AM I GOIN CRAZY, IT DON’T MAKE NO SENSE  
SEARCHIN FOR THAT GARDEN  
UNDERGROUND  
WENT HUNTING FOR THAT HIDDEN TREASURE—ALMOST DROWNED

MAMA WHERE'D YOU HIDE THAT ROSEBUSH

DADDY WHY'D YOU SINK THAT SHIP  
I GOT NOTHIN TO PUT IN MY JEWELRY BOX

AND I'M FEELIN A LITTLE SICK

**ALL:**

O

**EIGHT:**

MAMA WON'T YOU TAKE MY TEMPERATURE

DADDY WON'T YOU FILL THIS SCRIPT TRYNA GET WELL, TRYNA GET WELL BEFORE I ABSOLUTELY LOSE MY

**ALL:**

SHHHHHH...

Shh sh sh

Shh sh sh

Shh sh sh

*A flurry as performers head to the margins. As this happens, the actors portraying Made, Man and Miss reset for the beginning of the following section. The tempo of “Fixing Miss” must be even more clipped and the performances more intensified.*

**TWO:** The People prepare to say it.

**MADE:** Fixing Miss: A play within a play.

Characters: “M-A-D-E”—a woman of her own devising. Made stands at a table, loading a revolver.

**MAN:** Man. A man weary of the margins. Flexible. He stands at attention.

**MISS:** Miss enters. She is white, pearls, pantsuit, degrees, jittery.

**MAN:** As soon as Miss enters, Man becomes Driver, performing Miss’s favorite Negro dialect:



The cast of *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* in the Movement Theatre Company production.

Miss, Miss, whatcha need, Miss? Anythang you missed, Ima get for ya, Miss. Whatcha need?

**MISS:** Don't need anything from you.

Liberated and educated.

So liberated and educated that I don't need anything from you.

**DRIVER:** But...uh, Miss, I'll do anything for to make you happy!

**MISS:** O, hush.

**DRIVER:** Need me some purpose—

**MISS:** O, stop.

**DRIVER:** I could frame ya, if ya want. I'm frame-colored. It'd be my privilege—

**MISS:** Don't you start about privilege.

**DRIVER:** Yes ma'am...I need me a purpose up in this here play, otherwise I'm jus gonna slide right off the character list and into the margins—

**MISS:** Not my problem.

**DRIVER:** I mean it, Miss. Gimme somethin to do!

**MISS:** None of my concern.

*Driver begins to slide into the margins.*

**DRIVER:** I'm bein sucked into the margins, Miss!

*Miss watches him go. A moment. Then:*

**MISS:** O, come on back.

*Driver is back in a flash.*

**DRIVER:** Thank you, Miss!

**MISS:** No slouching. Stand up straight.

*He does so.*

**MISS:** Not too straight.

**DRIVER:** Huh?

**MISS:** Just. Please. My feet are tired.

*Driver happily gets on all fours. She sits on him.*

**MISS:** But don't think this means I need you.

**DRIVER:** Yes ma'am.

**MISS:** My hands are clean.

**DRIVER:** Yes ma'am.

**MISS** (Quietly): You don't...have a record, do you?

**DRIVER:** No ma'am.

**MISS:** Good. Firing you for having a record would make me look mean and racist.

**DRIVER:** 'Course.

**MISS:** My hands are clean.

**DRIVER:** Yes ma'am.

**MISS:** Now take me over to the housekeeper.

**DRIVER:** He carries her to Made.

**MADE:** Who is still loading those bullets into that revolver.

**MISS:** What are you doing?

**MADE:** Shelling peas.

**MISS:** Those don't look like peas.

Exotic?

**MADE:** Yes.

*She taps Driver and he carries her away.*

**MISS:** You hear that?

**DRIVER:** Yes ma'am.

**MISS:** Bit of an attitude.

**DRIVER:** Yes ma'am.

**MISS:** Had an attitude with Mama, too.

**DRIVER:** Uh huh.

**MISS:** And something is not right about those peas.

**DRIVER:** No ma'am.

**MISS:** That look in her eyes.

**DRIVER:** Yup.

**MISS:** I try my best. I'm one of the good ones.

**DRIVER:** Yup.

**MISS:** Should I be treated like trash just because you all have been oppressed?

**DRIVER:** Uh...?

**MISS:** My hands are clean.

**DRIVER:** Sho nuff. You 'bout the nicest white lady—

**MISS:** Hush. Got to focus.

Something's off-kilter here.

You feel it?

**DRIVER:** This yo story—

**MISS:** Take me back over there. I am going to assert myself non-racistly.

*Driver takes her over to Made, who mimes cleaning the chamber of a machine gun.*

**MADE:** Made is now cleaning the chamber of a machine gun.

**MISS:** How-what-how's your day going?

**MADE:** Fine.

**MISS:** What are you up to?

**MADE:** Scrubbing the bathtub.

**MISS:** Strange hour for scrubbing.  
We could talk about our kids. I'm sure they've got lots in common.

**MADE:** I don't have any kids.

**MISS:** Really? Mama said you had—

**MADE:** Really.

**MISS:** Are you planning on having—

**MADE:** If you don't mind, I'm needed scrubbing this tub.

**MISS:** I'm trying to have a conversation with you. You've been in the family for years. Let's talk.

**MADE:** We can talk but I can't stop scrubbing.

**MISS:** I'll start.  
I enjoy brunch, church and children.  
What do you like—

**MADE:** Don't want to mess up and miss a spot. Excuse me.

**MISS:** Okay.  
*Pats Driver who takes her away.*

**MISS:** I'll have to let her go.

**DRIVER:** O.

**MISS:** What?

**DRIVER:** Huh?

**MISS:** That was—

**DRIVER:** What—

**MISS:** Huh?

**DRIVER:** I don't—

**MISS:** Am I to keep a maid with an attitude problem?

**DRIVER:** No ma'am, but—

**MISS:** I non-racistly assert the right to have whichever one of y'all as my maid that I like!

**DRIVER:** Yes ma'am.

**MISS:** What?

**DRIVER:** Nothin.

**MISS:** Huh?

**DRIVER:** What?

**MISS:** She has other options, doesn't she?

**DRIVER:** Y'all done gave—

**MISS:** Take me back over there so I can fire her.

**DRIVER:** You the boss!

**MISS:** Wait!  
Ahem.  
You. Housekeeper. What are you doing?

**MADE:** Made is aiming a rocket launcher. She does not even look at Miss.

Vacuuming.

**MISS:** Put down that vacuum and come here.

**MADE:** I'm needed vacuuming.

**MISS:** You are needed where I say you are needed.

You are a luxury. My hands are clean. Come over here.

**MADE:** Made puts down the rocket launcher.

**MISS:** Your sass has gotten out of hand. Have you got anything to say?

**MADE:** What?

**MISS:** Are you going through a private crisis—

**MADE:** Nope.

**MISS:** Having some issue—

**MADE:** Nope—

**MISS:** I'm sympathetic—

**MADE:** No issue—

**MISS:** Maybe one of your kids is sick—  
*Made slaps Miss.*

**MADE:** Made slaps the shit out of Miss.  
*Miss continues as if she hadn't noticed.*

**MISS:** Maybe one of your kids is sick and—  
*Made slaps Miss again. Again, Miss continues as if she hadn't noticed.*

**MISS:** You're needing some time off. I can understand that.

**MADE:** I don't have any fucking kids you witless cunt!

**MISS:** You seem upset. If you'll apologize for your attitude today—

**MADE:** Made cannot stop!  
*Made continues hitting Miss, to no avail.*

**MISS:** Woman troubles, I presume. Not making use of one's womb will do that to—  
*Made kisses Miss square on the mouth.*

**MISS:** Miss is horrified, reacts as if she's been shot, stabbed, punched. She screams, moans, and rages, ending up on the floor.

You—

You—

You! Are! Fired!!

*Miss is dead.*

**MADE AND MAN:** O. shit.

**THREE:** I tried to love you, I tried.  
I tried to laugh with you but it sounded wrong. It was all jittery. It was all jittery because of your joke about how many Black people it takes to screw in a light bulb or how all the Black girls dance or whatever funny joke they're telling about Black people these days. I looked down and realized joke was on me literally, all over me and in me.

The kids were laughing. All of their pink faces laughing.

Teacher was trying to hide a titter behind her hand.

I do a little dance as I run back to the ghetto hoping I don't look too suspicious or particularly ready to die—

**EIGHT:** You were right about them coming  
You were right and now  
Won't nothing straighten out my neck  
Can't seem to  
Straighten out my neck  
Took a crane to it

**FOUR:** Prayed

**EIGHT:** Took a hammer to it

**FOUR:** Prayed

**EIGHT:** Got a brace for it. Wept and wailed

**FOUR:** Prayed

**EIGHT:** Got on the news and shook the man's hand  
Said it was okay, was gonna be okay

**FOUR:** Told people to pray  
Stopped the blood from coming out of my lover's body with my mouth  
Plugged it up

**EIGHT AND FOUR:** The camera rolling the whole time.

**EIGHT:** My spine doesn't riot, my arms aren't raised.

**FOUR:** Held hands with the other mothers  
Pinned a flower to me

**EIGHT:** Picked up the baby and the entrails they cut out  
All in the dust. Picked them up

**FOUR:** Took the thing from 'round my neck—

**EIGHT:** and ankles

**FOUR:** You ever try to kiss someone but you can't  
'cause you're too crooked?

**EIGHT:** Yeah. All the time. My ex used to tell me I tasted like copper.

**FOUR:** How does he know what copper tastes like?

**EIGHT:** Girrrrrrrrrrrl.

**SEVEN:** This ain't my Y.  
Somebody else did this one  
This Y is bleeding like a fresh cut.  
This Y got stitches in it.  
And I can't find my insides.  
I'm missing my insides like how the dead ones is missing their insides—

**FIVE:** You fux with white people?

**SIX:** Huh?

**FIVE:** With white people. You fux with them?

**SIX:** Naw, homey. Well. From time to time.

**FIVE:** Why?

**SIX:** Why?

**FIVE:** Yeah, why?

**SIX:** 'Cause all god's children needs to be fucked with.  
*They laugh.*

**FIVE:** How do you fuck with them?

**SIX:** Like this.  
*He walks normally.*

**FIVE:** You do that?

**SIX:** Hell yeah!

**FIVE:** In public?

**SIX:** Hell, hell yeah.

**FIVE:** You crazy.  
You got white friends?

**SIX:** Eyup.

**FIVE:** For real?

**SIX:** Eyup.

**FIVE:** How many?

**SIX:** I got so many white friends.

**FIVE:** How many?

**SIX:** Like seventy-eight.

**FIVE:** You actually keep count?

**SIX:** Eyup.

**FIVE:** What do you do with your white friends?

**SIX:** Go to the mall, eat biscotti, play video games.

**FIVE:** For real?

**SIX:** Yeah. Why you making such a big deal? I do the same thing with them I do with anyone else.

**FIVE:** For real?

**SIX:** Eyup.

**FIVE:** Go to their houses?

**SIX:** Eyup.

**FIVE:** What do you do there?

**SIX:** We watch movies. About elephants.

**FIVE:** Do you talk?

**SIX:** Only when the channel needs to be changed.

**FIVE:** O. That sounds normal.

**SIX:** And when my friend reaches down for a bit of popcorn but accidentally eats a bit of my finger.

**FIVE:** Say what?

**SIX:** Sometimes she eats but doesn't know she's eating me, so I'll be like, "Hey, Katelyn. You're eating me." If she hears me, she stops.

**FIVE:** O. That sounds normal.

**SEVEN:** Am

Am I?

Y'all, am I d—

*He would've said "dead."*

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL:** Yeah!

**FOUR:** We're gonna get in so much trouble for being gathered together like this, Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** And we ain't even in church, Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** And yelling, Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** And mad in public, Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** They might drop a nuke, Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** In fact, I'm sure they are, Black people

**ALL:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** I can hear the bomb coming. You'd better leave something behind before it gets here!

Drop something!

*Four and/or Three and/or anyone else with shredded paper drops some.*

**THREE:** They're all like, "What's the problem,

*(Inserts own name)?"*

'Cause as far as they're concerned, there isn't one.

Which of course is a little maddening.

I mean, just talking about it makes me feel like I'm orbiting them.

I don't want to orbit. I don't want to orbit.

What are they, the Sun? O god, it is maddening.

I tried to love, I tried.

It was like falling and waiting for the bottom waiting for the bottom

You know it's going to come

But when?

**SEVEN:** O, shit.

There's someone

someone's behind me Shit.

following me?

*Seven walks swiftly to escape his pursuer.*

**FIVE:** But...

**SIX:** But?

**FIVE:** But what if she doesn't hear you?

**SIX:** Who? My friend?

**FIVE:** Yeah, what if your friend doesn't hear you say, "Hey, Katelyn. You're eating me," and doesn't stop eating you. What do you do next?

**SIX:** Well.

I usually just eat a little of myself. So she doesn't feel embarrassed.

**FIVE:** O.

**SIX:** Just a little of myself, you know?

**FIVE:** Yeah. Okay. That sounds normal—

**SEVEN:** O, he's definitely following me.

Definitely.

**EIGHT:** You ever get your neck fixed?

**FOUR:** No. But now the world is bent too, so it all evens out.

**EIGHT:** Damn.

**SEVEN:** But I don't know why he's following me.

I got this Y in me

This deep Y in me

I look like one of the dead ones

I might be one of the...so I don't know what else he want—

**THREE:** I tried. Try. Past and present. I mean, I really, really do and did.

I beam, I smile, I listen. I do not take offense.

This is an office function, after all.

This is a classroom, after all.

This is a production meeting, after all—

**SEVEN:** I don't know what else he want.

I don't know what else he want—

**THREE:** This is a play, after all—

**SEVEN:** Iss enough ghosts up in here—

*All take an audible breath and rush into the margins, save for Two.*

### THIRD MOVEMENT

*This third time around, all action occurs a bit more quickly than the last time. Damn near breakneck speed.*

**TWO:** The People are coming because it is the day after or the day before it has gone down. You know what I mean by "it," right? The shit that don't stop.

It is the year (*Insert date and year*) and we are right here in (*Name of theatre/space/side of town*) and it is September 10th 2014 in Utah, the questions still looming

And June 17th 2015 in Charleston, the bodies still smoking

And July 5th 2016, the boy still wailing for his daddy

And July 6th 2016, the moan moaning and the red stain staining

And July 20th 2018, the papa still pleading And today, the people still trying to be people when it seems it might be easier to be something else.

Get it?

Bang!

**EIGHT:**

MAMA WHERE'D YOU HIDE THAT ROSEBUSH

DADDYWHY'D YOU SINK THAT SHIP  
I GOT NOTHIN TO PUT IN MY JEWELRY BOX

AND I'M FEELIN A LITTLE SICK

**ALL:**

O

**EIGHT:**

MAMA WON'T YOU TAKE MY TEMPERATURE

DADDYWON'TYOUFILL THIS SCRIPT  
TRYNAGETWELL, TRYNAGETWELL  
BEFORE I ABSOLUTELY LOSE MY  
**ALL:**

SHHHHHH...

Shh sh sh

Shh sh sh

Shh sh sh

*The tempo of "Fixing Miss" this time around must be really fast, as if the players are acting on fast-forward. The characterizations are angrier and the most realistic we've seen them. We see and feel their frustration with having to repeat themselves.*

**TWO:** The People prepare—

**MADE:** Fixing Miss: Play within play.

Characters: Made. Fed up.

**MAN:** Man. Weary of the margins. At attention.

**MISS:** Miss enters. White. Jittery.

**MAN:** Whatchoo need?

**MISS:** Nothing from you. Liberated.

**MAN:** Needs me some purpose—

**MISS:** Not my problem.

**MAN:** Characters in plays need purpose.

**MISS:** Not my problem.

**MAN:** Prolly gonna die.

**MISS:** Sounds like an exaggeration.

**MAN:** No, I'm actually afraid that I'm going to die—

**MISS:** Not my problem, nor my fault. Liberated. Could use a seat, though.

**MAN:** He becomes a seat.

**MISS:** Miss sees the Help.

Who's that?

**MAN:** That's (*Insert name of actor portraying Made*).

**MISS:** What's her deal?

**MAN:** She might be tired.

**MISS:** Of what?

**MAN:** Let's ask her.

**MISS:** You there, come here.

**MADE:** Made looks to the audience.

Who's she talking to?

**MISS:** Miss asks Driver,

Who's she talking to?

**MAN:** I don't know. Lotta ghosts around here—

**MISS:** Miss asks the Help who she's talking to.

**MADE:** No one. Everyone.

**MISS:** Come here.

**MADE:** I'm busy.

**MISS:** I said come here.

**MADE:** Okay. I'll come.

If you get my name right.

**MISS:** If I what?

**MADE:** Get my name right. What's my name?

**MISS:** How am I to know?

**MADE:** He just told you.

**MISS:** Did he?

**MAN:** I did.

**MISS:** Well. You must be (*Insert name of female cast member who is not playing Made. That cast member speaks up from wherever they are onstage*).

**CAST MEMBER 1:** No. That's me.

**MISS:** Uh, okay. Then you must be (*Insert name of another female cast member who is not playing Made. That cast member speaks from wherever they are onstage*).

**CAST MEMBER 2:** No, that's me.

**MISS:** Okay, then you're definitely (*Insert name of cast member portraying Man*).

**MAN:** No, that's me.

**MISS:** Well, hell's bells! How can I be expected to keep you all straight?

*Made slaps Miss.*

**MISS:** This parody is an insult to my—

*Made slaps Miss again.*

**MISS:** How am I supposed to—

*Made slaps Miss again.*

**MISS:** understand my role in this—

*Made slaps Miss again.*

*This time, Miss feels the slap. She holds her cheek in disbelief, falling to the ground.*

*Then she rises dramatically, making a long trek*

*across the space. She stumbles. Everyone watches. She catches her balance, continuing on. Eventually she turns to face everyone. The actor performs the following naturalistically—no heightening, lets go of Miss completely:*

**MISS:** I'd like to apologize on behalf of my entire race.

That's what you want, isn't it?

I am so fucking sorry that I was born white and that there is racism in the world and that you have to suffer through it, but what do you want me to do, huh? Huh? Give up my own life? Wade around miserably, feeling bad about a bunch of shit that happened before I was even born?! Anyone? Does anyone have an actual answer or are we all just supposed to join in this grand pity party?

What do you wanna do? Come into my house? Make it your own? Huh? Huh?

*She laughs.*

**MISS:** O yes, that's what you want, isn't it? To come into the house my daddy built with his brothers and uncles and grandfathers and grandmothers and sisters and nieces. You wanna come out of the fields into this house and put your feet up on the furniture! Well go ahead if it'll make you feel better! *By the end of this monologue, the actor has become Miss again. Heightened. Much drama.*

**MAN** (*No “Negro dialect”*): Man snaps his fingers (*Snap*) so Miss can see what's in the floorboards of what she thinks is her house. *Miss looks around, eyes wide.*

**MAN:** A truth sneaks in

**MISS:** Miss looks here and there for the comfort of a fellow White.

*Miss looks here and there, melodramatically.*

**MISS:** Finding none, she stumbles falls

gets back up

stumbles and falls again.

Then, the light catching her hair, she turns to the people she's always done her best to help and says:

*Miss turns to Man and Made. She is dying.*

**MISS:** There's

got to be

a

better way

for you

to protest than—

**MADE:** Nope.

*Miss is dead.*

**MAN:** She dead for good?

**MADE:** Nah. I give her about fifteen minutes. *Three enters from the margins, moving through the space, dropping more paper.*

**THREE:** I am carrying my mother's things.

They are not mine—I mean they are not

mine alone.

They are mine plus hers

They are seventy percent mine and thirty percent hers.

I carry them because her hands too shaky

I carry them because her arms too busy

I carry them because—

because them carry I

busy too arms her because them carry I  
shaky too hands her because them carry I  
hers percent thirty and mine percent seventy  
are they

hers plus mine are they

alone mine not are they—mean I mine not  
are they

things mother's my carrying am I—

*Seven enters. He's still being followed and terrified.*

**SEVEN:** He's coming fast, y'all.

He's right up on me but

I don't

I don't know him

And I ain't steal nothin

I swear I ain't

Wait

I do

Maybe I do know him

He looks kinda familiar—

*And Seven is on the run again. One, Eight and Four enter and sprinkle more paper on the ground, preparing. Five and Six speak:*

**FIVE:** I gotta say, though,

I once knew a dude whose friend could never hear him when he said, “You’re eating me.” So he kept on eating himself alongside his friend so the friend wouldn’t get embarrassed, you know?

**SIX:** Yeah? What happened?

**FIVE:** He ate himself all the way down to just a mouth and a throat.

**SIX:** O shit. What’d his friend do?

**FIVE:** She didn’t notice.

**SIX:** O. That sounds normal.

**SEVEN:** He’s coming faster

He got a look in his eyes like he—

**THREE:** I am carrying my sister’s things  
They are not mine—or rather they are not  
mine alone

They are mine plus hers

Her palms too dry

her head too full

I am carrying my brother’s things

They are not mine—or rather they are not  
mine alone

They are mine plus his

They are seventy percent mine and thirty  
percent his

I carry them because his chest too mouth  
too slack too riddled too big too brawny too  
tight too much to handle to do

too bad too bad too bad  
too bad too bad too bad  
This is my face.  
This is the face that I have  
It is a pretty good face, don't you think?  
No. Don't answer that.  
This is my face  
The one I was given when faces were being  
given out  
The job of a face is to tell the outside what  
the inside is thinking  
Or to hide what the inside is thinking from  
the outside  
Is that not the job of a face?  
And if it is, is my face doing its job?  
**EIGHT AND FOUR:** Don't answer that.  
This is my face.  
My mother pulled it from her ribs  
ironed it, shined it and here it is.  
A bit too much starch but Mom did what  
she had to do

**FIVE AND SIX:** This is my face. It is kind  
of soggy because my father thinks it is a  
handkerchief. He cried into it when his  
mother died. I can't get it dry. I can't get it dry.

**SEVEN:** He's  
y'all  
He won't stop  
Y'all he won't—

**TWO: BANG**  
*Seven falls, dead. A moment of horrified stillness  
as they look at Seven, who has fallen on the ground  
now cushioned by what should be lots of shredded  
white paper.*

**MADE:** Made doesn't have any kids  
Made doesn't have any kids and it is after the  
boy's been filled with holes  
the body washed and sobbed over  
and hymned over and placed into the ground.  
It is when the news cycle has cycled and  
his name has gone cold on nearly everyone's  
tongue.  
It is evening time and Made stands grinding  
glass  
and wishing  
She wishes she'd had The Talk with her son.  
She wishes she'd sat him down  
placed a firm hand on his shoulder and said:  
Son,  
When a white boy says, "Don't worry, you'll  
be clean like me some day."  
Find the nearest pile of dog shit  
and rub his miserable face in it.  
When a white woman crosses the street  
because she sees you coming  
Laugh maniacally. Give that bitch somethin  
to run away from.

When white folks call the police on you for

just standing there  
for merely being in time and space  
reach into their chests, pull their hearts out  
and eat them.

Made wishes, Made wishes.

When you've had a seizure on a train and an  
old white man in a suit  
drags you onto the platform so he won't be  
delayed getting home  
Wake your ass up  
put your hands around his throat  
and put that motherfucker on the tracks. See  
if that get him home faster

When you're on your way home and some  
monster stabs you in the neck  
Go ahead and die, baby. Die easy.  
But then I want you to come back in thirty days  
and when you find him  
skin him alive  
strip by strip of skin  
Take your time  
I wantcha to do it *strategically*  
Do his eyelids first  
so he get to watch  
'Cause they ain't learnin. You throwin words  
but it ain't working.  
You marchin, you screaming through a  
bullhorn but you dead and they smilin and  
I can't have it. I can't have it no more

Made wishes O Made wishes  
and she grinds that glass and she burns and  
she burns and she burns  
O god  
She burns.  
*Made sees the others around her.*  
**MADE:** But

there's a whole lotta ghosts up in here  
spirits in the margins lookin at Made  
lookin at me like they think  
I should turn back  
Give you less things to destroy  
It's nothing personal, I swear.  
I'm just a bit tired of your face lookin like  
it be lookin.  
It's everywhere.  
On my coffee mug. Over my shoulder. In  
my cereal. In my shoes.  
On my chest.  
Headlining my newspaper  
Everywhere, everywhere.  
*As the following speaking occurs, all continuously  
circle Seven's body, building the intensity of their  
movements and voices as it progresses.*

**ONE AND TWO:** Comin outta my iPod sounding

but not looking like me.  
On every screen. On every screen. On every  
screen. In the thread count of my sheets. At  
the beginning of this sentence.

**ONE, TWO, THREE AND FOUR:** Where the  
sidewalk ends. On the moon. On my soft  
palate. Down the street. Up the block. In  
my secrets. All up in the tofu. In Egypt.  
Overhead in a chopper. At the front of the  
submarine. In both the blockbuster and the  
flop. On the board. Treading the boards. In  
the dictionary. In the thesaurus.

**ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE AND SIX:**  
In the essay. In the footnote. In my uterus.  
Folded into my wallet. On the time stamp.  
In the credits. On the dotted line. Under my  
dick. On the bumper of my car. In the crease  
of my inner arm. In the promise. At the start  
and finish lines.

**ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX AND  
EIGHT:** On the beach. On the brochure. In  
my spit. In the ozone. On the dirt road. In my  
dreams (both day and regular). Past the stop  
sign. Behind the war zone. In the map key.  
Next door to the salon. In the mayoral race.  
On the court. In the court. Where my lips are  
split. Picking up the crumbs. In satellite. In  
stereo. En route. In season (always). In the  
season consistently. In the musculature. In  
the tremor and the sucked teeth. In Mama's  
blues. In Daddy's screams. In the mirror and  
so I must close the door on you.

*All give a group yell. Expulsion, expansion,  
cleansing of the spirit and the space. This takes  
as long as it needs to. Four waits for it to die out  
before they speak. By now they're in a tight circle  
around Seven's body.*

**FOUR:** The people speak the names.  
*Four goes to each participant in the circle  
individually with a bowl filled with small pieces  
of red ribbon. Each participant, save for Seven,  
recites the following:*

**PARTICIPANT:** "My name is *(Name of participant)*. I send something up in the name  
of *(Name of someone lost to racialized violence)*  
who was born on *(Birthdate of lost one)* and  
taken away on *(Date lost one was murdered)*."  
*The Participant then takes two handfuls of shredded  
paper and holds it in their hand.*

**FOUR:** Black people  
**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah  
**FOUR:** Black people  
**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah  
**FOUR:** Speak the names  
*All speak the name of the lost one they're honoring  
in unison.*

**FOUR:** Speak the names  
*All speak the name of the lost one they're honoring  
in unison.*

**FOUR:** May they what?

**ALL OTHERS:** Rest in power.

**FOUR:** May they what?

**ALL OTHERS:** Rest in power.

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Drop something.

Black people

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Drop something.

*All slowly and silently let the ribbon fall from their hands and onto Seven's body. An offering. When all of the ribbon has been dropped:*

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah

**FOUR:** They will call this a riot

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah

**FOUR:** They will call this a riot

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah

**FOUR:** What a riot.

**ALL OTHERS** (Spoken, sarcasm): Ha ha ha

**FOUR:** What a riot

**ALL OTHERS:** Ha ha ha

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah

**FOUR:** Get quiet.

The people are quiet for a full minute to honor the dead.

*All is still for a full minute. Respect this full minute.*

*They all help Seven to stand and join the circle.*

**FOUR:** You mad?

**ONE:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**TWO:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**THREE:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**FIVE:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**SIX:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**EIGHT:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**SEVEN:** Ah!

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah!

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**ALL:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

**ALL:** Ah!

**FOUR:** You mad?

*The following song/chant is confrontational. They address the viewers and maybe move into the audience.*

**ALL:**

WHO ME?

I'M NOT MAD AT ALL

I'M DRESSED TO THE NINES  
AND I'M GOIN TO A BALL:

WHAT'S THAT?  
THAT'S WHERE MY PEOPLE STAY  
WE INSIDE, WE OUTSIDE, WE THERE  
WE ON THE WAY

TO WHAT?  
TO WHAT IT'S GONNA BE  
THE MESS AND THE MESSAGE  
THE PEOPLE IN THE STREETS

WE FALLIN WE STANDING  
WE DANCIN IN THE LIGHT  
WE KICKIN, WE RUNNIN  
WE PLAYIN AND WE FIGHT LIKE

DOO DOO DOO DOO  
DOO DOO DOO DOO

AH AH AH AH  
AH AH AH AH

*All return to the playing space and stand in a circle.*

**FOUR:** Black people

**ALL OTHERS:** Yeah.

**FOUR:** Send it up!

Send it up!

Send it up!

*They send it up. This is a rigorous movement to rid the body/spirit of things that need ridding. Like shaking off a haint. Like a self-exorcism. The Participants should take all the time this needs. When this dies down, Eight sings a solo.*

**EIGHT:**

ONE DAY I'M GON PUT ON MY  
BEST SHOES

ONE DAY I'M GON PUT ON MY  
BEST SHOES

ONE DAY I'M GON PUT ON MY  
BEST SHOES

ONE DAY I'M GON PUT ON MY  
BEST SHOES

ONE DAY I'M GON PUT ON MY  
BEST SHOES

AND SET MY FEET TO WALKIN

ONE DAY I'M GON PUT ON MY  
BEST SHOES

ONE DAY I'M GON CUT OFF ALL  
MY HAIR

ONE DAY I'M GON CUT OFF ALL  
MY HAIR

ONE DAY I'M GON CUT OFF ALL  
MY HAIR

ONE DAY I'M GON CUT OFF ALL  
MY HAIR

AND NEVERMIND THEM WATCHING

ONE DAY I'M GON CUT OFF ALL  
MY HAIR

ONE DAY I'M GON SEE YOU  
STANDING THERE

ONE DAY I'M GON SEE YOU  
STANDING THERE

ONE DAY I'M GON SEE YOU  
STANDING THERE

ONE DAY WHEN I SEE YOU  
STANDING THERE

I HOPE YOU KNOW YOU KNOW ME  
ONE DAY I'M GON SEE YOU  
STANDING THERE

**ALL:**

ONE DAY I'M GON LOOK UP TO  
THE SKY

ONE DAY I'M GON LOOK UP TO  
THE SKY

ONE DAY I'M GON LOOK UP TO  
THE SKY

ONE DAY I'M GON LOOK UP TO  
THE SKY

ONE DAY I'M GON LOOK UP TO  
THE SKY

AND FIND IT WON'T BE FALLING  
ONE DAY I'M GON LOOK UP TO  
THE SKY

HEY Y'ALL

HEY

HEY Y'ALL

HEY

HEY Y'ALL HEYY'ALL HEYY'ALL HEYY'ALL HEY  
*During the course of the "HEY Y'ALL" portion of the song, each person takes turns taking space and dancing in the center of the circle. This is joyful. Once everyone has had their turn, they return to seriousness. Two addresses us:*

**TWO:** Earlier, many of you wrote some things down you'd like to offer to Black people. I'd like to share a few of them now for anyone present and send them up to those no longer with us. Please sit forward in your chair and plant your feet as we do this.

*Someone hands Two a few of the notes written in the beginning of the ritual. It's probably best to screen these.*

**TWO:** I'll read what's written and we'll all repeat it, sending it up.

Here we go.

*He reads three notes and asks the audience to repeat them three times each.*

**TWO:** We've all seen, heard and experienced a lot this evening.

*Takes time to look around the room, giving people a moment.*

**TWO:** As we think about these things, let's take a collective breath. Please join us if you need to. On three. One, two, three.

*They breathe.*

**TWO:** Again.

*Breath.*

**TWO:** And one last time.

Breath.

**TWO:** The ritual is not over

In a minute we'll disperse for the final portion  
But, these are our last few moments together  
as one group  
so we want to thank you.

*They gather for bows as he speaks.*

**TWO:** We want to thank you

we want to thank you for being here with us.  
*Bows.*

**TWO:** At this time, we'd like to invite the  
Black folks who are present to stay in this  
space and we invite our non-Black friends  
to head out into the lobby where someone  
is waiting to greet you. We'll take just a very  
few minutes to do this and we'll continue.

*To the Black folks, in their space:*

**TWO:** Let's form a circle.

If there is anyone here who would like to  
speak the name of someone we've lost to anti-  
Black violence, please take a step forward.

*People may step forward to speak a name. Allow  
as much or as little time for this as necessary.*

**TWO:** Let's form a circle together.

We're gonna take a moment just to be with  
each other.

Look at the face of each person in this circle.

*This happens.*

**TWO:** The idea that we're separate is an illusion.  
Racism will make you feel lonely but no one  
here is alone.

We've got a strong tradition of community.  
We've got each other

And

We've got the ghosts, the ancestors in the  
margins rooting for us.

Now I'm gonna give some calls and I'd love  
for y'all to respond with "yeah."

Black people

Yeah

Black people

Yeah

Black people

Yeah

You Beautiful people

Yeah

You Creative people

Yeah

You Strong people

Yeah

You Tender people

Yeah

You Smart people

Yeah

You Funny people

Yeah

You Varied people

Yeah

You Fly people

Yeah

You Sky people

Yeah

You Dark-Skinned-people

Yeah

You Light-Skinned-people

Yeah

You Middle of the Road Brown people

Yeah

You Passing people

Yeah

You Queer people

Yeah

You Black Panther people

Yeah

You Blues people

Yeah

You Quiet people

Yeah

You Book-Read people

Yeah

You Hood people

Yeah

You Field Holler people

Yeah

You Trans people

Yeah

You Ancient people

Yeah

There is love, Black people

Yeah

There is love, Black people

Yeah

Right here, Black people

Yeah

Do you feel it, Black people?

Yeah

Do you feel it, Black people?

Yeah

You're here, Black people

Yeah

You're here, Black people

Yeah

And you belong, Black people

Yeah.

Thank you all so much for being with us.

We hope this has been useful to you.

We invite you to head out into the lobby where  
we hope you'll keep the conversation going.

*Meanwhile, a facilitator reads the following to the  
non-Black folks, in their space, once the non-Black  
viewers have made their way outside.*

**FACILITATOR:** The following is a note from the  
creator of *What to Send Up When It Goes Down*:  
A good friend once told me that we each

have a different job where challenging racism  
is concerned. She spoke to the ways she  
could use her privilege as a white woman to  
dismantle the white supremacist ideology that  
contributes to the deaths of so many people.  
As a Black woman and writer, I am uniquely  
positioned to create a piece of theatre focused  
on making space for Black people. This is one  
way I can contribute. This is my offering.  
I'd like to end this ritual by challenging you to  
consider what *you* are uniquely positioned to  
offer. As a non-Black person, what is a tangible  
way you can disrupt the idea responsible for  
all of these lives needlessly taken?  
My hope is that you will consider this deeply.  
My further hope is that your consideration  
will turn to action.

**END**

her own wool from pygmy goats she personally birthed and raised on a farm in Idaho.

While not conceding much about her own links to the real-life Hillary, Metcalf did admit that, like many, she felt “completely” torn apart by the 2016 election. And though the play’s setting in 2008 means it isn’t poised to relitigate either the contentious Bernie-vs.-Hillary primary or the intensely polarized general-election campaign against Trump, it has no shortage of moments of reckoning between Bill and Hillary, between Hillary and Barack, and between Hillary and her unseen public and posterity. This Hillary, presumably like the real one, chafes at her thankless position in an impossible limbo somewhere between the spotlight and the shadow of her problematic husband, where she’s asked to somehow mean all things to all people yet feels as constrained by sexist expectations as by her own shortcomings, if these can even be disentangled.

Yes, it’s an “alternate universe,” but also, yes, Metcalf said she relishes the chance to “give the audience a way to feel a kind of catharsis in being able to hear Hillary say some of the stuff she says in this play. I’m sensing that that’s what the audience might need. I think it’s gonna be helpful for them. Emotionally.”

Which raises the question: What does Metcalf need, emotionally? What drives her? How does one of our greatest stage actors do it? The source of an actor’s work is inevitably themselves and their own life experiences, but there’s a delicate, not to mention properly private, alchemy between the role and the person, which Metcalf and her col-

leagues—and I—do well to respect. Peek too far behind the curtain and the magic may be spoiled. The rough personal sketch: Metcalf has been married and divorced twice, has lived in a number of places, though mostly in L.A. (despite not caring much for it), and has raised four kids, among them Zoe Perry, also an actor, who currently stars on “Young Sheldon” as a younger version of the tightly wound mom character Metcalf created on “The Big Bang Theory.” Perry, who acted with her mom in the Broadway run of *The Other Place*, was telling me about her mother’s approach to an individual role, but she could have been describing the odd directionality, amid ups and downs, of Metcalf’s craft and career when she said, “She’s always driving toward something. It’s a labor of love, but it’s a labor; she leaves no stone unturned.”

Steppenwolf’s Shapiro offered an analogy to illustrate the sharp divide between Metcalf on- and offstage. Recalling a college boyfriend who was a swimmer, she said, “He was incredibly elegant in the pool, but when he would get out and walk on the earth, his body was cumbersome; he lumbered along. For Laurie, when she’s able to put on a mask, that’s like being a swimmer; she is more comfortable when she is transformed. That is how Laurie communes with the world. She does it as an actor and as a mom, and that’s it. When you recognize that’s the way a person gets oxygen, you do everything you can as a colleague to get them to the air. I don’t think she could live without it. I think we’re all kind of lucky that she’s like that. I don’t know how lucky she is.”

As the sole founding member from one

of America’s great theatre companies who is still crushing it in leading stage roles, luck may have nothing to do with it. As Pendleton said, “The astonishing thing is that she’s as great as she always was. She had nowhere to go but down, but she hasn’t. There are different textures in the work now, but the quality is as electric as it was in 1979. It’s hard to be that good for that long.”

The key to such mastery may be a kind of letting go. I asked Metcalf about Darlene, the naïve prostitute from Lanford Wilson’s *Balm in Gilead*, whom the playwright described bluntly in a stage direction as “stupid.” If she’s able to let part of her mind step outside a play, I wondered, is she also willing to step outside a character and pass judgment on her?

“I don’t worry about laying into the negative aspects of a character,” she said by way of explanation, in the process offering a kind of manifesto for her work, from her intellectually disabled Laura in Steppenwolf’s seminal *The Glass Menagerie* all the way up to her still-gestating Hillary. “I actually find it kind of endearing that a character can be selfish, mean-spirited, ugly. I embrace the ugly, because generally I have provided the character also with a moment of the opposite. With Darlene, it was fun to lay into the stupid, because when she has moments of clarity that she doesn’t even know are coming across, it’s so heartbreaking to an audience. You know? I guess it’s not a judgment. It’s like a trust that the audience will see deeper. It might take a while. But when they do, then you’ve let your character earn their sympathy.” 

the Beatles. The mainstream hits of art are often first seen in their importance by young people,” Tepper says. In fact, the 2017-18 Broadway season saw a record level of attendance from children and teens, according to the Broadway League’s annual survey.

But as the form’s fortunes rise, so does the scarcity of real estate on Broadway. “It’s more difficult now than it’s ever been, for a number of reasons,” reports Viertel, who serves as senior vice president at Jujamcyn Theatres. “We have approximately 40 theatres on Broadway, but the actual buildings that you can put a show into keeps shrinking”

as long runs proliferate. “There’s more capital for producing, so there are many more shows being developed that are looking for a theatre—it’s becoming harder and harder, and there’s no solution in sight,” he says.

While that situation can lead to theatre owners being risk-averse—opting for known quantities and brands rather than untested authors—the current Broadway season is encouragingly full of writing teams making their Main Stem debuts. That so many new voices are still entering the landscape is a harbinger of the musical’s new vitality. Years after *Hamilton*, *Fun Home*, and *Dear*

*Evan Hansen* raised the bar for the form, the American musical is still singing out strong.

“I always imagined we were too far out of the box, stylistically, to have a home on Broadway,” confesses *Hadestown*’s Mitchell. “But, you know, it’s thrilling to see Broadway embracing a lot of different sounds these days—*Hamilton*, *Great Comet*. Theatres and audiences are hungry for out-of-the-box approaches to musical storytelling.” 

**Suzy Evans is a former senior editor of this magazine.**



The logo for the 2019 Gala Stories event. It features the word "GALA" in green inside a red circle, and "2019" in purple inside a green circle. The word "STORIES" is written in large, stylized letters in blue, orange, and purple, with a small "tcg" logo in a red circle to the right of the "E".

To all those who came together on February 4 to make our 2019 Gala a success — our brilliant honorees and co-chairs; exceptional performers, speakers and director; and everyone who supported TCG through this wonderful annual event — **THANK YOU for being part of our story. We're so proud to be part of yours.**

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Theatre Communications Group

Here's what's playing this month at TCG theatres nationwide. For the most up-to-date information about performance schedules, contact the theatre or visit Theatre Profiles online: [tcg.org/profiles](http://tcg.org/profiles).

● **TCG THEATRES**  
TICKET DISCOUNT  
PROGRAM

## ALABAMA

**Alabama Shakespeare Festival**, Montgomery, (334) 271-5353, [asf.net](http://asf.net)  
**Our Town**, Thornton Wilder; dir: Bruce Longworth. Thru Apr 27.  
**Romeo and Juliet**, Shakespeare; dir: Rick Dildine. Thru Apr 28.  
**Steel Magnolias**, Robert Harling; dir: Rick Dildine. Thru May 5.  
**Into the Breeches**, George Brant; dir: Shana Gozansky. Apr 4-May 4.  
**As You Like It**, Shakespeare; dir: Greta Lambert. Apr 11-25.

## ALASKA

● **Cyrano's Theatre Company**, Anchorage, (907) 274-2599, [cyranos.org](http://cyranos.org)  
**Tea for Three**, Elaine Bromka. Thru Apr 21.

## ARIZONA

**Arizona Theatre Company**, Tucson, (520) 622-2823, [arizonatheatre.org](http://arizonatheatre.org)  
**American Mariachi (Phoenix)**, José Cruz González; dir: Christopher Acebo. Apr 4-21.

**Things I Know To Be True (Tucson)**, Andrew Bovell; dir: Mark Clements. Apr 20-May 11. Co-production with Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, WI

● **Childsplay**, Tempe, (602) 252-8497, [childplayaz.org](http://childplayaz.org)  
**The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show**, adapt: Jonathan Rockefeller. Thru Apr 21.  
**Schoolhouse Rock Live!**, music and lyrics: Lynn Ahrens, Bob Dorough, Dave Frishberg, Kathy Mandry, George Newall, Tom Yohe. Apr 28-May 26.  
● **Invisible Theatre Co**, Tucson, (520) 882-9721, [invisibletheatre.com](http://invisibletheatre.com)  
**Letters From Zora**, Gabriella Denise Pina; dir: Anita Dashiell-Sparks. Apr 6-7.  
**iTheatre Collaborative**, Phoenix, (602) 252-8497, [itheatreaz.org](http://itheatreaz.org)  
**Frost/Nixon**, Peter Morgan; dir: Rosemary Close. Thru Apr 13.  
**The Rogue Theatre**, Tucson, (520) 551-2053, [theroguetheatre.org](http://theroguetheatre.org)  
**The Crucible**, Arthur Miller; dir: Christopher Johnson. Apr 25-May 12.  
● **Valley Youth Theatre**, Phoenix, (602) 253-8188, [vyt.com](http://vyt.com)  
**Tuck Everlasting**, dir: Bobb Cooper. Apr 5-21.

## ARKANSAS

**TheatreSquared**, Fayetteville, (479) 443-5600, [theatre2.org](http://theatre2.org)  
**Arkansas New Play Festival**, Thru Apr 7.

## CALIFORNIA

● **24th Street Theatre Company**, Los Angeles, (213) 745-6516, [24thstreet.org](http://24thstreet.org)  
**The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane**, adapt: Dwayne Hartford; dir: Jane McEneaney. Thru May 19.  
● **6th Street Playhouse**, Santa Rosa, [6thstreetplayhouse.com](http://6thstreetplayhouse.com)  
**The Revolutionists**, Laura Gunderson; dir: Lennie Dean. Mar 15-Apr 7.

**To Kill a Mockingbird**, adapt: Christopher Sergel; dir: Martino Pistone. Apr 26-May 12.

**American Conservatory Theater**, San Francisco, (415) 749-2228, [act-sf.org](http://act-sf.org)  
**Her Portmanteau**, Mfoniso Odufia; dir: Victor Malana Maog. Thru Apr 14.  
**Vanity Fair**, Kate Hamill; dir: Jessica Stone. Apr 17-May 12. Co-production with Shakespeare Theatre Company, DC

**Antaeus Theatre Company**, Glendale, (818) 506-1983, [antaeus.org](http://antaeus.org)  
**Diana of Dobson's**, Cicely Hamilton; dir: Casey Stangl. Apr 11-Jun 3.

● **Aurora Theatre Company**, Berkeley, (510) 843-4822, [auroratheatre.org](http://auroratheatre.org)  
**Actually**, Anna Ziegler; dir: Tracy Ward. Thru Apr 21.

● **Berkeley Repertory Theatre**, **Home**, Geoff Sobelle; dir: Lee Sunday Evans. Thru Apr 21.  
**The Good Book**, Denis O'Hare, Lisa Peterson (also dir). Apr 25-Jun 9.

**CalArts Center for New Performance**, Valencia, (661) 253-7800, [centerfornewperformance.org](http://centerfornewperformance.org)  
**Scene with Cranes**, Octavio Solis. Apr 22-May 4.

**California Repertory Company**, Long Beach, (562) 985-5526, [calrep.org](http://calrep.org)  
**In the Penal Colony**, book: Rudolph Wurlitzer; music: Phillip Glass; dir: Jeff Janisheski. Apr 25-May 5.

**Capital Stage Company**, Sacramento, (916) 995-5464, [capstage.org](http://capstage.org)  
**Vietgone**, Qui Nguyen. Thru Apr 14.

**Center Repertory Company**, Walnut Creek, (925) 943-7469, [centerrep.org](http://centerrep.org)  
**The Diary of Anne Frank**, adapt: Wendy Kesselman from Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett; dir: Timothy Near. Thru Apr 28.

● **Center Theatre Group**, Los Angeles, (213) 972-4400, [centertheatregroup.org](http://centertheatregroup.org)  
**Lackawanna Blues**, Ruben Santiago-Hudson (also dir); music: Bill Sims Jr. Thru Apr 21.  
**Block Party**, Thru Apr 28.



The cast of Alabama Shakespeare Festival's *Our Town*.

SHANNON HEUPEL

**FalseTos**, book: James Lapine (also dir); book, music, lyrics: William Finn. Apr 16-May 19.

**Chance Theater**, Anaheim, (888) 455-4212, [ChanceTheater.com](http://ChanceTheater.com)

**Skylight**, David Hare; dir: Oanh Nguyen. Apr 19-May 19.

● **City Lights Theater Company**, San Jose, [cltc.org](http://cltc.org)

**Eurydice**, Sarah Ruhl; dir: Lisa Mallette. Thru Apr 14.

**Company of Angels**, Los Angeles, [companyofangels.org](http://companyofangels.org)

**LA Views**, Thru Apr 15.

**Cornerstone Theater Co**, Los Angeles, (213) 613-1700, [cornerstonetheater.org](http://cornerstonetheater.org)

**Change 1: the Watts Residency**, Nancy Keystone (also dir). Thru Apr 7.

**Native Nation**, Larissa FastHorse; dir: Michael John Garcés. Apr 20-28.

**The Custom Made Theatre Company**, San Francisco, [custommade.org](http://custommade.org)

**American Hero**, Bess Wohl; dir: Allie Moss. Thru Apr 6.

**Cygnets Theatre Company**, San Diego, (619) 337-1525, [cygnetstheatre.com](http://cygnetstheatre.com)

**Angels in America - Part One: Millennium Approaches**, Tony Kushner; dir: Sean Murray. Thru Apr 20.

**Angels in America - Part Two: Perestroika**, Tony Kushner; dir: Sean Murray. Thru Apr 20.

**Dell'Arte International**, Blue Lake, (707) 668-5663, [dellarte.com](http://dellarte.com)

**Tragedy**, Apr 25-28.

● **Diversionary Theatre**, San Diego, (619) 220-0097, [diversionary.org](http://diversionary.org)

**Hedwig and the Angry Inch**, book: John Cameron Mitchell; music and lyrics: Stephen Trask; dir: Matt M. Morrow. Thru Apr 21.

**Ensemble Theatre Company**, Santa Barbara, (805) 965-5400, [etcbsb.org](http://etcbsb.org)

**Everything is Illuminated**, adapt: Simon Block; dir: Jonathan Fox. Apr 11-28.

**Geffen Playhouse**, Los Angeles, (310) 208-5454, [geffenplayhouse.org](http://geffenplayhouse.org)

**Black Super Hero Magic Mama**, Inda Craig-Galván; dir: Robert O'Hara. Thru Apr 14.

**Antigone**, dir: Kate Whoriskey. Apr 9-May 12.

**Golden Thread Productions**, San Francisco, (415) 626-4061, [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org)

**Scenes From 71\* Years**, Hannah Khalil; dir: Michael Malek Najjar. Apr 5-May 5.

**Laguna Playhouse**, Laguna Beach, (949) 497-2787, [lagunaplayhouse.com](http://lagunaplayhouse.com)

**Heisenberg**, Simon Stephens; dir: Stephanie Coltrin. Thru Apr 14.

**Magic Theatre**, San Francisco, (415) 441-8822, [magictheatre.org](http://magictheatre.org)

**In Old Age**, Mfoniso Udozia. Thru Apr 21.

**MainStreet Theatre Company**, Rancho Cucamonga, (909) 477-2752, [lewisfamilyplayhouse.com](http://lewisfamilyplayhouse.com)

**The Emperor's Nightingale**, Damon Chua; dir: Tim Dang. Apr 29-May 19.

● **Marin Theatre Company**, Mill Valley, (415) 388-5208, [marintheatre.org](http://marintheatre.org)

**Jazz**, Nambi E. Kelley; music: Marcus Shelby; dir: Awoye Timpo. Apr 25-May 19.

**Native Voices at the Autry**, Los Angeles, (323) 667-2000, <https://theautry.org/nativevoices>

On tour: **Stories From the Indian Boarding School**, Native Voices Artists Ensemble; dir: Jean Bruce Scott. Thru Jun 30.

● **The New Conservatory Theatre Center**, San Francisco, (415) 861-8972, [nctcsf.org](http://nctcsf.org)

**The Gentleman Caller**, Philip Dawkins. Apr 5-May 5.

**New Village Arts Theatre**, Carlsbad, (760) 433-3245, [newvillagearts.org](http://newvillagearts.org)

**THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS**, adapt: Samantha Ginn, A.J. Knox (also dir). Apr 5-May 5.

**A Noise Within**, Pasadena, (626) 356-3100, [anoisewithin.org](http://anoisewithin.org)

**Othello**, Shakespeare; dir: Jessica Kubzansky. Thru Apr 28.

**The Glass Menagerie**, Tennessee Williams; dir: Geoff Elliott. Thru Apr 26.

**Argonautika: The Voyage of Jason and the Argonauts**, Mary Zimmerman; dir: Julia Rodriguez-Elliott. Thru May 5.

● **North Coast Repertory Theatre**, Solana Beach, (858) 481-1055, [northcoastrep.org](http://northcoastrep.org)

**All in the Timing**, David Ives; dir: David Ellenstein. Thru May 5.

● **The Old Globe**, San Diego, (619) 234-5623, [theoldglobe.org](http://theoldglobe.org)

**Life After**, book, music, lyrics: Britta Johnson; dir: Barry Edelstein. Thru Apr 28.

**They Promised Her the Moon**, Laurel Ollstein; dir: Giovanna Sardelli. Apr 6-May 5.

**PCPA Pacific Conservatory Theatre**, Santa Maria, (805) 922-8313, [pcpa.org](http://pcpa.org)

**A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder**, book and lyrics: Robert L. Freedman; music and lyrics: Steven Lutvak. Apr 25-May 12.

● **The Road Theatre Company**, North Hollywood, [roadtheatre.org](http://roadtheatre.org)

**Friends With Guns**, Stephanie Alison Walker; dir: Randee Trabitz. Thru May 4.

● **The Robey Theatre Company**, Los Angeles, (186) 681-1411, [robeytheatrecompany.com](http://robeytheatrecompany.com)

**Birdland Blue**, Randy Ross; dir: Ben Guillory. Apr 6-May 12.

**Sacred Fools Theater**, Los Angeles, [sacredfools.org](http://sacredfools.org)

**Tangerine Sunset**, Peter Fluet; dir: JJ Mayes. Thru Apr 13.

**San Diego Repertory Theatre**, (619) 544-1000, [sdrep.org](http://sdrep.org)

**Sweat**, Lynn Nottage; dir: Sam Woodhouse. Apr 18-May 12.

● **South Coast Repertory**, Costa Mesa, (714) 708-5555, [scr.org](http://scr.org)

**Poor Yella Rednecks**, Qui Nguyen; dir: May Adrales. Thru Apr 27.

**Sheepdog**, Kevin Artigue; dir: Leah C. Gardiner. Apr 14-May 5.

**TheatreWorks**, Palo Alto, (650) 463-1960, [theatreworks.org](http://theatreworks.org)

**Hershey Felder: A Paris Love Story**, Hershey Felder; dir: Trevor Hay. Apr 3-28.

## COLORADO

**Arvada Center for the Arts & Humanities**, Arvada, (720) 898-7200, [arvadacenter.org](http://arvadacenter.org)

**The Diary of Anne Frank**, adapt: Wendy Kesselman from Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett; dir: Christy Montour-Larson. Thru May 17.

**The Moors**, Jen Silverman; dir: Anthony Powell. Thru May 18.

**Sin Street Social Club**, Jessica Austgen; dir: Lynne Collins. Thru May 19.

**Trav'lin' The 1930s Harlem Musical**, book: Gary Holmes, Allan Shapiro; music: J.C. Johnson; dir: Rod A. Lansberry. Apr 9-28.

**Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company**, (303) 444-SEAT, [betc.org](http://betc.org)

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time**, adapt: Simon Stephens; dir: Stephen Weitz. Apr 25-May 19.

**Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College Theatre Company**, (719) 634-5583, [coloradocollege.edu/fac](http://coloradocollege.edu/fac)

**Ben and the Magic Paintbrush**, Bathsheba Doran. Thru Apr 7.

**Hands on a Hardbody**, adapt: Trey Anastasio, Amanda Green. Thru Apr 14.

**Bad Dates**, Theresa Rebeck. Apr 26-May 19.

● **Curious Theatre Company**, Denver, (303) 623-0524, [curioustheatre.org](http://curioustheatre.org)

**Skeleton Crew**, Dominique Morisseau; dir: donnie I. betts. Thru Apr 13.

**OpenStage Theatre & Co**, Fort Collins, (970) 221-6730, [openstage.com](http://openstage.com)

**Avenue Q**, book: Jeff Whitty; music and lyrics: Robert Lopez, Jeff Marx; dir: Sydney Parks Smith. Thru Apr 27.

**Phamaly Theatre Company**, Denver, [phamaly.org](http://phamaly.org)

**Morph Masters: How Disability Made Famous Artists Awesome!**, Phamaly Theatre Company; dir: Charlie Oates. Thru Dec 31.

**THEATREWORKS**, Colorado Springs, (719) 255-3232, [theatreworks.org](http://theatreworks.org)

**Little Shop of Horrors**, book and lyrics: Howard Ashman; music: Alan Menken; dir: Nathan Halvorson. Apr 25-May 19.

## CONNECTICUT

**Connecticut Repertory Theatre**, Storrs, (860) 486-2113, [crt.uconn.edu](http://crt.uconn.edu)

**If We Were Birds**, Erin Shields; dir: Helene Kvale. Thru Apr 7.

**Henry IV**, Shakespeare; dir: Madeline Sayet. Apr 25-May 5.

**Hartford Stage**, (860) 527-5151, [hartfordstage.org](http://hartfordstage.org)

**Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense**, David Goodale, Robert Goodale; dir: Sean Foley. Thru Apr 14.

**Long Wharf Theatre**, New Haven, (203) 787-4282, [longwharf.org](http://longwharf.org)

**An Iliad**, Denis O'Hare, Lisa Peterson; dir: Whitney White. Thru Apr 14.

**Yale Repertory Theatre**, New Haven, (203) 432-1234, [yalerep.org](http://yalerep.org)

**Twelfth Night**, Shakespeare; dir: Carl Cofield. Thru Apr 6.

**Cadillac Crew**, Tori Sampson; dir: Jesse Rasmussen. Apr 26-May 18.

## DELAWARE

● **Delaware Theatre Company**, Wilmington, (302) 594-1100, [delawaretheatre.org](http://delawaretheatre.org)

**Honk!**, book and lyrics: Anthony Drewe; music: George Stiles; dir: Bud Martin. Apr 17-May 12.

**Resident Ensemble Players**, Newark, (302) 831-2204, [rep.udel.edu](http://rep.udel.edu)

**Mauritius**, Theresa Rebeck; dir: Stephen Pelinski. Apr 17-May 12.

**Fences**, August Wilson; dir: Walter Dallas. Apr 25-May 12.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**Arena Stage**, (202) 488-3300, [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org)

**JQ**, Aaron Posner (also dir). Thru Apr 14.

**Junk**, Ayad Akhtar; dir: Jackie Maxwell. Apr 5-May 5.

Discounted tickets are available to TCG Individual Members for performances at participating theatres, marked on these pages with an orange dot ●. Please check with each theatre for performance times, ticket discounts, and ticket availability. Present your TCG membership card to receive ticket discounts. Theatre participation is subject to change. For information on becoming an Individual Member, see [tcg.org/Membership/IndividualMembership.aspx](http://tcg.org/Membership/IndividualMembership.aspx).

**Jubilee**, Tazewell Thompson. Apr 26-Jun 2.

**Folger Theatre**, (202) 544-7077, [folger.edu/theatre](http://folger.edu/theatre)

**Love's Labor's Lost**, Shakespeare; dir: Vivienne Benesch. Apr 30-Jun 9.

**GALA Hispanic Theatre**, (202) 234-7174, [galatheatre.org](http://galatheatre.org)

**Fame, The Musical (en español)**, book: David Da Silva, José Fernandez; lyrics: Jaques Levy; music: Steve Margoshes; dir: Luis Salgado. Apr 25-Jun 2.

**Mosaic Theater Company of DC**,

[mosaictheater.org](http://mosaictheater.org)

**Sooner/Later**, Allyson Currin; dir: Gregg Henry. Thru Jun 19.

**Native Son**, Nambi E. Kelley; dir: Psalmayene 24. Thru Apr 28.

**The Shooting Gallery**, Aaron Davidman; dir: Michael John Garces. Apr 7-27.

**The Shakespeare Theatre Company**,

(202) 547-1122, [shakespearetheatre.org](http://shakespearetheatre.org)

**The Oresteia**, Ellen McLaughlin; dir: Michael Kahn. Apr 30-Jun 2.

**Studio Theatre**, (202) 332-3300, [studiotheatre.org](http://studiotheatre.org)

**Queen of Basel**, Hilary Bettis; dir: Jose Zayas. Thru Apr 7.

**P.Y.G. or the Mis-Edumacation of Dorian Belle**, Tearable Arvelle Chisholm. Apr 3-28.

● **Theater J**, (202) 777-3210, [theaterj.org](http://theaterj.org)

**The Jewish Queen Lear**, Jacob Gordin; dir: Adam Immerwahr. Thru Apr 7.

**Woolly Mammoth Theatre Co**, (202) 393-3939, [woollymammoth.net](http://woollymammoth.net)

**What the Constitution Means to Me**, Heidi Schreck; dir: Oliver Butler. Apr 1-28.

## FLORIDA

**American Stage Theatre Company**,

St Petersburg, (727) 823-7529, [americanstage.org](http://americanstage.org)

**The Roommate**, Jen Silverman; dir: Kristin Clippard. Thru Apr 7.

**Mamma Mia!**, Catherine Johnson; music and lyrics: Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus; dir: Stephanie Gularite. Apr 10-May 12.

● **Asolo Repertory Theatre**, Sarasota, (941) 351-8000, [asolo.org](http://asolo.org)

**Sweat**, Lynn Nottage; dir: Nicole A. Watson. Thru Apr 13.

**Noises Off**, Michael Frayn; dir: Don Stephenson. Thru Apr 20.

**The Cake**, Bekah Brunstetter; dir: Lavina Jadhwan. Apr 3-28.

● **Emerald Coast Theatre Company**, Miramar Beach, (850) 684-0232

**Around the World in 80 Days**, adapt: Mark Brown from Jules Verne; dir: Nathanael Fisher. Thru Apr 7.

● **Florida Repertory Theatre**, Fort Myers, (239) 332-4488, [floridarep.org](http://floridarep.org)

**Million Dollar Quartet**, Colin Escott, Floyd Mutrux; dir: Jason Parrish. Thru Apr 21.

**Native Gardens**, Karen Zácaras; dir: Stefan Novinski. Apr 2-May 19.

● **Florida Studio Theatre**, Sarasota, (941) 366-9000, [floridastudiotheatre.org](http://floridastudiotheatre.org)

**The Wonder Years - The Music of the Baby Boomers**, Rebecca Hopkins, Richard Hopkins; book: Jim Prosser; dir: Catherine Randazzo. Thru Jun 9.

**Buyer and Cellar**, Jonathan Tolins; dir: Catherine Randazzo. Thru Apr 12.

**A 'Beary' Big Adventure & Other Winning Plays**, dir: Jason Cannon. Thru Apr 20.

**Wednesday's Child**, Mark St. Germain; dir: Kate Alexander. Apr 3-May 24.

● **GableStage**, Coral Gables, (305) 445-1119, [gablestage.org](http://gablestage.org)

**The Children**, Lucy Kirkwood. Thru Apr 14.

**Gulfshore Playhouse**, Naples, (866) 811-4111, [gulfshoreplayhouse.org](http://gulfshoreplayhouse.org)

**Holmes and Watson**, Jeffrey Hatcher; dir: Andrew Paul. Thru Apr 21.

**Jobsite Theater**, Tampa, (813) 229-7827, [jobsitetheater.org](http://jobsitetheater.org)

**The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) <revised>**, Adam Long, Daniel Singer, Jess Winfield; dir: Katrina Stevenson. Thru Apr 7.

**Maltz Jupiter Theatre**, Jupiter, (561) 575-2223, [jupitertheatre.org](http://jupitertheatre.org)

**West Side Story**, book: Arthur Laurents; lyrics: Stephen Sondheim; music: Leonard Bernstein; dir: Marcos Santana. Thru Apr 14.

**Miami New Drama | Colony Theatre, Cocaine Cowboys**, Billy Corben, Aurin Squire. Thru Apr 7.

**Palm Beach Dramaworks**, West Palm Beach, (561) 514-4042, [palmbeachdramaworks.org](http://palmbeachdramaworks.org)

**Fences**, August Wilson; dir: William Hayes. Thru Apr 21.

**Dramalogue - Talking Theatre**, Apr 9.

**Red Barn Theatre**, Key West, (305) 296-9911, [redbarntheatre.com](http://redbarntheatre.com)

**Meteor Shower**, Steve Martin; dir: Joy Hawkins. Thru Apr 20.

**Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe**, Sarasota, (941) 366-1505, [westcoastblacktheatre.org](http://westcoastblacktheatre.org)

**Love Sung in the Key of Aretha**, Nate Jacobs (also dir). Thru Apr 28.

## GEORGIA

**7 Stages**, Atlanta, (404) 523-7647, [7stages.org](http://7stages.org)

**Angry Fags**, Topher Payne. Thru Apr 14.

● **Actor's Express**, Atlanta, (404) 607-7469, [actors-express.com](http://actors-express.com)

**Falsettos**, book: William Finn (also lyrics), James Lapine; dir: Freddie Ashley. Thru Apr 28.

**Alliance Theatre**, Atlanta, (404) 733-5000, [alliancetheatre.org](http://alliancetheatre.org)

**The Wizard of Oz**, adapt: John Kane from L. Frank Baum; music and lyrics: Harold Arlen, E.Y. Harburg; dir: Rosemary Newcott. Thru Apr 14.

**Angry, Raucous, and Shamelessly Gorgeous**, Pearl Cleage; dir: Susan V. Booth. Thru Apr 14.

**Approval Junkie**, Faith Salie; dir: Amanda Watkins. Apr 5-28.

**Aurora Theatre**, Lawrenceville, (678) 226-6222, [auroratheatre.com](http://auroratheatre.com)

**Men With Money**, book and lyrics: Bill Nelson; music and lyrics: Joseph Trefler; dir: Justin Anderson. Thru Apr 7.

**Georgia Ensemble Theatre**, Roswell, (770) 641-1260, [get.org](http://get.org)

**Bullets Over Broadway**, Woody Allen. Apr 11-28.

**Out of Hand Theater**, Atlanta, (404) 462-8836, [outofhandtheater.com](http://outofhandtheater.com)

**The Helene Mills Seniors Story**, Adam Fristoe, Ariel Fristoe. Thru Apr 1.

**The Dogwood Quest**, Maureen Downs, Adam Fristoe, Ariel Fristoe. Apr 13.

● **Synchronicity Theatre**, Atlanta, (404) 484-8636, [synchrotheatre.com](http://synchrotheatre.com)

**The Hero's Wife**, Aline Lathrop. Apr 12-May 5.

● **Theatrical Outfit**, Atlanta, (678) 528-1500, [theatricaloutfit.org](http://theatricaloutfit.org)

**I Love to Eat**, James Still; dir: Clifton Guterman. Apr 10-May 5.

## HAWAII

**Honolulu Theatre for Youth**, Honolulu, (808) 839-9885, [htyweb.org](http://htyweb.org)

**The Adventures of Pinocchio**, Nathaniel Niemi. Apr 12-May 18.

**Kumu Kahua Theatre**, Honolulu,

(808) 536-4444, [kumukahua.org](http://kumukahua.org)

**The Watcher of Waipuna**, Gary Pak; dir: Harry Wong. Thru Apr 20.

## IDAHO

**Boise Contemporary Theater**, (208) 331-9224, [bctheater.org](http://bctheater.org)

**Rabbit/Moon**, Dwayne Blackaller, Matthew Cameron Clark (also dirs). Apr 17-May 4.

## ILLINOIS

**16th Street Theater**, Berwyn, (708) 795-6704, [16thstreettheater.org](http://16thstreettheater.org)

**Vacationing in the Moral High Ground**, Julie Ganey; music: Mike Przygoda; dir: Megan Shuchman. Thru Apr 20.

**Adventure Stage Chicago**, (773) 342-4141, [adventurestage.org](http://adventurestage.org)

**Fast Food Chain**, Andrew Marikis; dir: Daryl Brooks. Apr 26-May 18.

**American Blues Theater**, Chicago, (773) 327-5252, [americanbluestheater.com](http://americanbluestheater.com)

**The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey**, James Lecesne; dir: Kurt Johns. Thru Apr 27.

**Chicago Shakespeare Theater**, (312) 595-5600, [chicagoshakes.com](http://chicagoshakes.com)

**Hamlet**, Shakespeare; dir: Barbara Gaines. Apr 17-Jun 9.

● **Court Theatre**, Chicago, (773) 753-4472, [courttheatre.org](http://courttheatre.org)

**For Colored Girls**, Ntozake Shange; dir: Seret Scott. Thru Apr 14.

**First Folio Theatre**, Oak Brook, (630) 986-8067, [firstfolio.org](http://firstfolio.org)

**The Firestorm**, Meridith Friedman; dir: Rachel Lambert. Thru Apr 28.

**Goodman Theatre**, Chicago, (312) 443-3800, [goodmantheatre.org](http://goodmantheatre.org)

**Sweat**, Lynn Nottage; dir: Ron OJ Parson. Thru Apr 14.

● **The House Theatre of Chicago**,

(773) 769-3832, [thehousetheatre.com](http://thehousetheatre.com)

**The Magic Parlour**, Dennis Watkins. Aug 3-Jul 28.

**Pinocchio**, adapt: Ben Lobpries, Joseph Steakley; dir: Chris Mathews. Thru May 19.

**Jackalope Theatre Company**, Chicago, [jackalopetheatre.org](http://jackalopetheatre.org)

**Dutch Masters**, Greg Keller; dir: Wardell Julius Clark. Thru Apr 6.

**Lookingglass Theatre Co**, Chicago, (312) 337-0665, [lookingglasstheatre.org](http://lookingglasstheatre.org)

**Act(s) of God**, Kareem Bandealy; dir: Heidi Stillman. Thru Apr 7.

**Northlight Theatre**, Skokie, (847) 673-6300, [northlight.org](http://northlight.org)

**Landladies**, Sharyn Rothstein; dir: Jess McLeod. Thru Apr 20.

● **Raven Theatre Company**, Chicago, (773) 338-2177, [raventheatre.com](http://raventheatre.com)

**Yen**, Anna Jordan; dir: Elly Green. Thru May 5.

● **Sideshow Theatre Company**, Chicago, [sideshowtheatre.org](http://sideshowtheatre.org)

**The Ridiculous Darkness**, adapt: Ian Martin (also dir) from Wolfram Lotz. Thru Apr 28.

**Steep Theatre Company**, Chicago, (773) 649-3186, [steeptheatre.com](http://steeptheatre.com)

**First Love is the Revolution**, Rita Kalnejais. Apr 18-May 25.

**Steppenwolf Theatre Co**, Chicago, (312) 335-1650, [steppenwolf.org](http://steppenwolf.org)

**The Children**, Lucy Kirkwood; dir: Jonathan Berry. Apr 18-Jun 9.

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Clara Furey

Catherine Gaudet

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● **Victory Gardens Theater**, Chicago, (773) 871-3000, [VictoryGardens.org](http://VictoryGardens.org)  
**Cambodian Rock Band**, Lauren Yee; dir: Marti Lyons. Apr 5-May 5.

**Williams Street Repertory**, Crystal Lake, (815) 356-9212, [wsrep.org](http://wsrep.org)  
**Emma: a pop musical**, Eric Prince; dir: Robin M. Hughes. Thru Apr 20.

● **Writers Theatre**, Glencoe, (847) 242-6000, [writerstheatre.org](http://writerstheatre.org)  
**A Number**, Caryl Churchill; dir: Robin Witt. Thru Jun 9.

## INDIANA

● **Cardinal Stage Company**, Bloomington, (812) 336-9300, [cardinalstage.org](http://cardinalstage.org)

**The Glass Menagerie**, Tennessee Williams. Thru Apr 7.

● **Indiana Repertory Theatre**, Indianapolis, (317) 635-5252, [irtlive.com](http://irtlive.com)  
**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: James Still. Thru Apr 7.  
**Amber Waves**, James Still; dir: Lisa Rothe. Apr 2-28.  
**You Can't Take it With You**, Moss Hart, George S. Kaufman; dir: Peter Amster. Apr 23-May 19.

**Phoenix Theatre, Inc.**, Indianapolis, (317) 635-7529, [phoenixtheatre.org](http://phoenixtheatre.org)  
**The Christians**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Martha Jacobs. Thru Apr 14.  
**The Children**, Lucy Kirkwood; dir: Bill Simmons. Apr 26-May 19.

## KENTUCKY

● **Actors Theatre of Louisville**, (502) 584-1205, [actorstheatre.org](http://actorstheatre.org)

**The Corpse Washer**, Sinan Antoon; adapt: Ismail Khalidi and Naomi Wallace; dir: Mark Brokaw. Thru Apr 7.

**The Thin Place**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Les Waters. Thru Apr 7.

**How to Defend Yourself**, Lily Padilla; dir: Marti Lyons. Thru Apr 7. Co-production with Victory Gardens Theater, IL

**Everybody Black**, Dave Harris; dir: Awoye Timpo. Thru Apr 7.

**We've Come to Believe**, Kara Lee Corthron, Emily Feldman, Matthew Paul Olmos; dir: Will Davis. Thru Apr 7.

● **Lexington Children's Theatre**, (859) 254-4546, [lctonstage.org](http://lctonstage.org)  
**Charlotte's Web**, adapt: Joseph Robinette; dir: Esther Neel. Apr 14-28.

## LOUISIANA

**Playmakers of Baton Rouge**, Baton Rouge, [playmakersbr.org](http://playmakersbr.org)  
**13**, Apr 18-28.

● **Southern Rep Theatre**, New Orleans, (504) 522-6545, [southernrep.com](http://southernrep.com)  
**Azul**, Christina Quintana; dir: Estefania Fadul. Thru Apr 14.

## MAINE

**Penobscot Theatre**, Bangor, (207) 942-3333, [penobscottheatre.org](http://penobscottheatre.org)

**Fun Home**, book and lyrics: Lisa Kron; music: Jeanine Tesori; dir: Bari Newport. Apr 25-May 12.

● **Portland Stage Company**, (207) 774-0465, [portlandstage.org](http://portlandstage.org)  
**Skeleton Crew**, Dominique Morrisseau. Apr 2-21.  
**The Last Five Years**, book, music, lyrics: Jason Robert Brown. Apr 30-May 19.

## MARYLAND

**Everyman Theatre**, Baltimore, (410) 752-2208, [everymantheatre.org](http://everymantheatre.org)

**Dinner With Friends**, Donald Margulies; dir: Vincent M. Lancisi. Thru Apr 14.

**Imagination Stage**, Bethesda, (301) 280-1660, [imaginationstage.org](http://imaginationstage.org)  
**Escape from Peligro Island**, Finegan Kruckemeyer; dir: Kathryn Chase Bryer. Apr 27-May 2.

**Maryland Ensemble Theatre**, Frederick, (301) 694-4744, [marylandensemble.org](http://marylandensemble.org)  
**Curse of the Starving Class**, Sam Shepard; dir: Peter Wray. Apr 4-28.

● **Olney Theatre Center for the Arts**, (301) 924-3400, [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org)  
**A Comedy of Tenors**, Ken Ludwig; dir: Jason King Jones. Apr 10-May 12.

● **Round House Theatre**, Bethesda, (240) 644-1100, [roundhousetheatre.org](http://roundhousetheatre.org)  
**Oslo**, J. T. Rogers; dir: Ryan Rilette. Apr 24-May 19.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**American Repertory Theater**, Cambridge, (617) 547-8300, [americanrepertorytheater.org](http://americanrepertorytheater.org)

**Dragon Lady**, Sara Porkalob. Thru Apr 6.

**Dragon Mama**, Sara Porkalob. Thru Apr 6.

**Clairvoyance**, Diana Oh. Apr 24-28.

**ArtsEmerson**, Boston, (617) 824-8000, [artsemerson.org](http://artsemerson.org)

**American Moor**, Keith Hamilton Cobb; dir: Kim Wield. Apr 10-21.

**Company One Theatre**, Boston, (617) 933-8600, [companyone.org](http://companyone.org)

**Vietgone**, Qui Nguyen. Apr 26-May 26.

**Huntington Theatre Company**, Boston, (617) 266-0800, [huntingtontheatre.org](http://huntingtontheatre.org)

**Indecent**, Paula Vogel; dir: Rebecca Taichman. Apr 26-May 25.

● **Merrimack Repertory Theatre**, Lowell, (978) 654-4678, [mrt.org](http://mrt.org)

**The Haunted Life**, adapt: Sean Daniels (also dir) from Jack Kerouac; dir: Christopher Oscar Pena. Thru Apr 14.

**Cry It Out**, Molly Smith Metzler; dir: Amanda Charlton. Apr 24-May 19.

● **New Repertory Theatre**, Watertown, (617) 923-8487, [newrep.org](http://newrep.org)

**Cardboard Piano**, Hansol Jung; dir: Benny Sato Ambush. Thru Apr 14.

**Becoming Dr. Ruth**, Mark St. Germain. Apr 27-May 19.

## MICHIGAN

**Detroit Public Theatre**, (313) 576-5111, [detroitpublictheatre.org](http://detroitpublictheatre.org)

**Girlfriend**, adapt: Todd Almond; lyrics: Matthew Sweet; dir: Joe Bailey. Thru Apr 14.

● **Detroit Repertory Theatre**, (313) 868-1347, [detroitreptheatre.com](http://detroitreptheatre.com)

**Aubrey**, Joe Musso; dir: Barbara Busby. Thru May 19.

● **Flint Repertory Theatre**, Flint, (810) 237-7333, [flintrep.org](http://flintrep.org)

**The Glass Menagerie**, Tennessee Williams; dir: Michael Lluberes. Apr 5-14.

**Meadow Brook Theatre**, Rochester, (248) 377-3300, [mbtheatre.com](http://mbtheatre.com)

**Stick Fly**, Lydia R. Diamond; dir: Travis Walter. Thru Apr 14.

**The Marvelous Wonderettes**, Roger Bean; dir: Travis Walter. Apr 24-May 19.

● **Thunder Bay Theatre, Inc.**, Alpena, [thunderbaytheatre.com](http://thunderbaytheatre.com)

**The Glass Menagerie**, Apr 5-20.

**Williamston Theatre**, Williamston, (517) 655-7469, [williamstonetheatre.org](http://williamstonetheatre.org)  
**The Gin Game**, D.L. Coburn; dir: John Lepard. Thru Apr 20.

## MINNESOTA

**Children's Theatre Company**, Minneapolis, (612) 874-0400, [childrenstheatre.org](http://childrenstheatre.org)

**The Hobbit**, adapt: Greg Banks (also dir); music: Thomas Johnson. Thru Apr 14.

**Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical**, book: Dennis Kelly; music and lyrics: Tim Minchin; dir: Peter C. Brosius. Apr 28-Jun 23.

● **Commonweal Theatre Company**, Lanesboro, (800) 657-7025, [commonwealththeatre.org](http://commonwealththeatre.org)

**Holmes and Watson**, Jeffrey Hatcher; dir: Peter Moore. Apr 5-Jul 6.

**Guthrie Theater**, Minneapolis, (612) 377-2224, [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org)

**Cyrano de Bergerac**, adapt: Joseph Haj from Edmond Rostand. Thru May 5.

**Metamorphoses**, Mary Zimmerman. Apr 13-May 19.

**History Theatre**, St Paul, (651) 292-4323, [historytheatre.com](http://historytheatre.com)

**Sisters of Peace**, Doris Baizley; dir: Barbra Berlovitz. Thru Apr 14.

**Jungle Theater**, Minneapolis, (612) 822-7063, [jungletheater.com](http://jungletheater.com)

**School Girls: Or, the African Mean Girls Play**, Jocelyn Bioh; dir: Shá Cage. Thru Apr 14.

**Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company**, St Paul, (651) 647-4315, [mnjewishtheatre.org](http://mnjewishtheatre.org)

**Shul**, Sheldon Wolf; dir: Robert Dorfman. Apr 27-May 19.

**Theater Mu**, St. Paul, (651) 789-1012, [muperformingarts.org](http://muperformingarts.org)

**Dandelion Girl**, May Lee-Yang; dir: Randy Reyes. Thru Apr 7.

**Brothers Paranormal**, Prince Gomolvlas; dir: Randy Reyes. Apr 30-May 24.

**Park Square Theatre**, St Paul, (651) 291-7005, [parksquaretheatre.org](http://parksquaretheatre.org)

**Marjorie Prime**, Jordan Harrison; dir: Elena Giannetti. Apr 19-May 19.

**Penumbra Theatre Company**, St Paul, (651) 224-3180, [penumbratheatre.org](http://penumbratheatre.org)

**REEL Talk: An Oversimplification of Her Beauty**, Apr 15.

**The Brothers Paranormal**, Prince Gomolvlas; dir: Randy Reyes. Apr 30-May 26. Co-production with Theatre Mu, MN

**The Playwrights' Center**, Minneapolis, (612) 332-7481, [pwcenter.org](http://pwcenter.org)

**The Dance**, Kim Euell. Apr 1-2.

**Theater Latté Da**, Minneapolis, [latteda.org](http://latteda.org)

**Hedwig and the Angry Inch**, John Cameron Mitchell; music and lyrics: Stephen Trask; dir: Annie Enneking, Peter Rothstein. Thru May 5.

## MISSISSIPPI

● **New Stage Theatre**, Jackson, (601) 948-3531, [newstagetheatre.com](http://newstagetheatre.com)

**Sweat**, Lynn Nottage. Apr 23-May 5.

## MISSOURI

**The Coterie Theatre**, Kansas City, (816) 474-6552, [thecoterie.org](http://thecoterie.org)

**Beat Bugs: A Musical Adventure**, adapt: David Abbinanti, Sean Cercone. Apr 16-May 19.

● **Insight Theatre Company**, St Louis, (314) 534-1111, [insighttheatrecompany.com](http://insighttheatrecompany.com)  
**Daddy Long Legs**, book: John Caird; music and lyrics: Paul Gordon; dir: Maggie Ryan. Thru Apr 14.

**Kansas City Repertory Theatre**, (816) 235-2700, [kcrep.org](http://kcrep.org)  
**Pride and Prejudice**, Kate Hamill; book: Jane Austen; dir: Marissa Wolf. Thru Apr 14.  
**Frida...A Self-Portrait**, Vanessa Severo; dir: Joanie Schultz. Apr 19-May 19.  
**Unreliable**, Dipika Guha; dir: Marissa Wolf. Apr 20-May 19.

**Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre**, Kansas City, (816) 569-3226, [metkc.org](http://metkc.org)  
**The Shawshank Redemption**, David Johns, Owen O'Neill. Apr 4-28.

**The Repertory Theatre of St Louis**, (314) 968-4925, [repstl.org](http://repstl.org)  
**The Tortoise and the Hare**, book: Sarah Brandt; music and lyrics: Neal Richardson; dir: Laurie McConnell. Thru Apr 6.  
**Greek Myths: Heroes and Monsters**, Michael Erickson; dir: Gad Guterman. Thru Apr 7.  
**The Play That Goes Wrong**, Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, Henry Shields; dir: Edward Stern. Thru Apr 7.

● **Unicorn Theatre**, Kansas City, (816) 531-7529, [unicorntheatre.org](http://unicorntheatre.org)  
**Bond**, Logan Black; dir: Cynthia Levin. Apr 24-May 19.

**Upstream Theater**, St Louis, (314) 863-4999, [upstreamtheater.org](http://upstreamtheater.org)  
**Salt, Root and Roe**, Tim Price. Apr 26-May 12.

## MONTANA

**Montana Repertory Theatre**, Missoula, [montanarep.org](http://montanarep.org)  
**Room Service**, Emily Feldman, Idris Goodwin, Claire Kiechel, Sam Myers, Mara Nelson-Greenberg. Apr 16-21.

## NEBRASKA

**The BLUEBARN Theatre**, Omaha, (402) 345-1576, [bluebarn.org](http://bluebarn.org)  
**Indecent**, Paula Vogel. Thru Apr 14.

● **Nebraska Repertory Theatre**, Lincoln, (402) 472-4747, [nebraskarep.org](http://nebraskarep.org)  
**Hair**, book: James Rado, Gerome Ragni; music: Galt Macdermot; dir: Andy Park. Thru Apr 7.  
**Spirit of '68**, dir: Andy Park. Apr 20.

**Omaha Theater Company**, (402) 345-4849, [rosetheater.org](http://rosetheater.org)  
**Winnie the Pooh**, adapt and lyrics: le Clanche du Rand; lyrics: A. A. Milne, Kristen Sergel; music: Allan J. Friedman. Thru Apr 7.  
**Broken Mirror - A Rose Teens 'N' Theater Production**, Apr 4-7.  
**Dragons Love Tacos**, adapt: Erin Nolan. Apr 26-May 12.

## NEVADA

**Bruka Theatre**, Reno, (775) 323-3221, [bruks.org](http://bruks.org)  
**The Lavender Ball - Celebration**, Apr 6.  
**The Crucible**, Arthur Miller; dir: Holly Natwora. Apr 26-May 18.

## NEW JERSEY

**Centenary Stage Company**, Hackettstown, (908) 979-0900, [centenarystageco.org](http://centenarystageco.org)  
**Women Playwrights Series**, Apr 10-24.  
**New Jersey Repertory Company**, Long Branch, (732) 229-3166, [njrep.org](http://njrep.org)  
**The Source**, Jack Canfora; dir: Evan Bergman. Thru Apr 7.

**Two River Theater**, Red Bank, (732) 345-1400, [tworivertheater.org](http://tworivertheater.org)  
**The Belle of Amherst**, William Luce; dir: Robert Rechnitz. Apr 13-May 5.

## NEW YORK

**Atlantic Theater Company**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [atlantictheater.org](http://atlantictheater.org)  
**The Mother**, Florian Zeller; dir: Trip Cullman. Thru Apr 7.  
**The Barrow Group**, NYC, (212) 760-2615, [barrowgroup.org](http://barrowgroup.org)  
**The Thickness of Skin**, Clare MacIntyre; dir: Lee Brock. Thru Apr 11.

**Bridge Street Theatre**, Catskill, (518) 943-3818, [bridgest.org](http://bridgest.org)  
**The Letters**, David Zellnik; dir: John Sowle. Apr 25-May 5.

● **Geva Theatre Center**, Rochester, (585) 232-4382, [gevatretheatre.org](http://gevatretheatre.org)  
**Native Gardens**, Karen Zacarias; dir: Melissa Crespo. Thru Apr 21. Co-production with Syracuse Stage, NY  
**The Royale**, Marco Ramirez; dir: Pirronne Yousefzadeh. Apr 11-28.

**Irish Classical Theatre Co**, Buffalo, (716) 853-4282, [irishclassicaltheatre.com](http://irishclassicaltheatre.com)  
**Hamlet**, Shakespeare; dir: Kate LoConti. Apr 26-May 19.

**Irondale Ensemble Project**, Brooklyn, (718) 488-9233, [irondale.org](http://irondale.org)  
**To Protect, Serve and Understand**, dir: Michael David Gordon, Terry Greiss, Sam Metzger, Rivka Rivera. Thru Jun 1.  
**Art Buffet 5**, Apr 12.

**Brecht In Exile Part One: GALILEO**, Bertolt Brecht; dir: Jim Niesen. Apr 23-May 18.

**Kitchen Theatre Company**, Ithaca, (607) 272-0403, [kitchentheatre.org](http://kitchentheatre.org)  
**2.5 Minute Ride**, Lisa Kron; dir: Zoë Golub-Sass. Apr 21-May 5.

● **LaGuardia Performing Arts Center**, Long Island City, (718) 482-5151, [LPAC.nyc](http://LPAC.nyc)  
**Rough Draft Festival**, Thru Apr 13.  
**Faust 2.0**, adapt: Matthew Maguire from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; music: Daniel Moses Schrier; dir: Sharon Fogarty. Thru Apr 14.

**Manhattan Theatre Club**, NYC, (212) 239-6200, [ManhattanTheatreClub.com](http://ManhattanTheatreClub.com)  
**INK**, James Graham; dir: Rupert Goold. Apr 2-Jun 9.

**Ma-Yi Theater Company**, NYC, [ma-yitheatre.org](http://ma-yitheatre.org)  
**Fruiting Bodies**, Samantha Chanse. Apr 5-May 19.

● **Metropolitan Playhouse**, NYC, (212) 995-8410, [metropolitanplayhouse.org](http://metropolitanplayhouse.org)  
**Big White Fog**, Theodore Ward; dir: Alex Roe. Apr 12-May 12.

**MusicalFare Theatre**, Amherst, (716) 839-8540, [musicalfare.com](http://musicalfare.com)  
**Late in the Evening: The World According to Paul Simon**, Randall Kramer, Jon Lehrer, Michael Walline (also dir), Zak Ward; music and lyrics: Paul Simon. Apr 24-May 26.  
**The New Group**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [thenewgroup.org](http://thenewgroup.org)  
**Yea, Sister!**, Jesse Eisenberg; dir: Scott Elliott. Apr 30-Jun 9.

**New York Theatre Workshop**, NYC, (212) 460-5475, [nytw.org](http://nytw.org)  
**Sanctuary City**, Martyna Majok. Apr 17-May 26.

**Pan Asian Repertory Theatre**, NYC, [panasianrep.org](http://panasianrep.org)  
**The Brothers Paranormal**, Prince Gomolvlas; dir: Jeff Liu. Apr 27-May 19.

**Phoenix Theatre Ensemble**, NYC, (212) 352-3101, [PhoenixTheatreEnsemble.org](http://PhoenixTheatreEnsemble.org)  
**A Family Affair or The Bankrupt**, adapt: Nick Dear from Alexander Ostrovsky. Thru Apr 18.  
**Faust Part I**, adapt: Mark Jackson from Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Thru Apr 19.

**Playwrights Horizons**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [phnyc.org](http://phnyc.org)  
**The Pain of My Belligerence**, Halley Feiffer; dir: Trip Cullman. Thru May 12.

**The Public Theater**, NYC, (212) 967-7555, [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org)  
**White Noise**, Suzan-Lori Parks; dir: Oskar Eustis. Thru Apr 14.  
**Ain't No Mo**, Jordan E. Cooper; dir: Stevie Walker-Webb. Thru Apr 21.  
**Socrates**, Tim Blake Nelson; dir: Doug Hughes. Apr 2-May 19.

**Red Bull Theater**, NYC, (212) 352-3101, [redbulltheater.com](http://redbulltheater.com)  
**THE WHITE DEVIL**, John Webster; dir: Louisa Proske. Thru Apr 14.

**Road Less Traveled Productions**, Buffalo, (716) 629-3069, [roadlesstraveledproductions.org](http://roadlesstraveledproductions.org)  
**The Undeniable Sound of Right Now**, Laura Eason; dir: David Oliver. Apr 26-May 19.



Brandon Carter and John Harrell in *Henry IV, Part 1* at the American Shakespeare Center.

LINDSEY WALTERS

**Syracuse Stage**, Syracuse, (315) 443-3275, [syracusestage.org](http://syracusestage.org)

**Pride and Prejudice**, Kate Hamill; dir: Jason O'Connell. Mar 20-Apr 7.

**The Humans**, Stephen Karam; dir: Mark Cuddy. Apr 24-May 12. Co-production with Geva Theatre Center, NY

**Theatre for a New Audience**, NYC, (212) 229-2819, [TFANA.org](http://TFANA.org)

**Julius Caesar**, Shakespeare; dir: Shana Cooper. Thru Apr 28.

● **The Vineyard Theatre**, NYC, (212) 353-0303, [vineyardtheatre.org](http://vineyardtheatre.org)

**Do You Feel Anger?**, Mara Nelson-Greenberg; dir: Margot Bordelon. Thru Apr 20.

## NORTH CAROLINA

● **Actor's Theatre of Charlotte**, (704) 342-2251, [atcharlotte.org](http://atcharlotte.org)

**The Great Beyond**, Steven Dietz; music: Rob Witmer; dir: Chip Decker. Thru Apr 6. Co-production with the Children's Theatre of Charlotte, NC

**Burning Coal Theatre Co**, Raleigh, (919) 834-4001, [burningcoal.org](http://burningcoal.org)

**The Great Celestial Cow**, Sue Townsend; dir: Sonia Desai. Apr 11-28.

● **Cape Fear Regional Theatre**, Fayetteville, (910) 323-4233, [cfrt.org](http://cfrt.org)

**The Cake**, Bekah Brunstetter; dir: David Caldwell. Apr 4-21.

**Children's Theatre of Charlotte**, (704) 973-2828, [ctcharlotte.org](http://ctcharlotte.org)

**The Ghost of Splinter Cove**, Thru Apr 7.

**Pete the Cat**, Apr 12-May 5.

**Picaro**, Apr 27-28.

**PlayMakers Repertory Company**, Chapel Hill, (919) 962-7529, [playmakersrep.org](http://playmakersrep.org)

**How I Learned to Drive**, Paula Vogel; dir: Lee Sunday Evans. Apr 3-21.

**Your Healing is Killing Me**, Virginia Grise (also dir). Apr 24-29.

● **Triad Stage**, Greensboro, (336) 272-0160, [triadstage.org](http://triadstage.org)

**Man of La Mancha**, book: Dale Wasserman; lyrics: Joe Daron; music: Mitch Leigh; dir: Preston Lane. Apr 28-May 19.

## OHIO

**Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park**, (513) 421-3888, [cincyplay.com](http://cincyplay.com)

**The Thanksgiving Play**, Larissa Fasthorse; dir: Lisa Portes. Thru Apr 21.

**You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown**, book, music, lyrics: Clark Gesner; dir: Bill Fennelly. Apr 20-May 18.

**Cincinnati Shakespeare Company**, (513) 381-2273, [cincyshakes.com](http://cincyshakes.com)

On tour: **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, Shakespeare; dir: Caitlin McWethy. Thru May 26.

On tour: **Romeo and Juliet**, Shakespeare; dir: Jeremy Dubin. Thru May 26.

On tour: **Julius Caesar**, Shakespeare; dir: Sara Clark. Thru May 26.

On tour: **Macbeth**, Shakespeare; dir: Darnell Pierre Benjamin. Thru May 26.

**Macbeth**, Shakespeare; dir: Miranda McGee. Apr 3-May 4.

**Cleveland Play House**, (216) 241-6000, [clevelandplayhouse.com](http://clevelandplayhouse.com)

**Tiny Houses**, Chelsea Marcantel; dir: Laura Kepley. Thru Apr 14.

**Native Gardens**, Karen Zacarias; dir: Robert Barry Fleming. Apr 27-May 19.

● **Cleveland Public Theatre**, (216) 631-2727, [cptonline.org](http://cptonline.org)

**Test Flight**, Thru Apr 20.

**Dobama Theatre**, Cleveland Heights, (216) 932-3396, [dobama.org](http://dobama.org)

**THIS**, Melissa Gibson; dir: Nathan Motta. Apr 26-May 26.

● **Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati**, (513) 421-3555, [ensemblecincinnati.org](http://ensemblecincinnati.org)

**Skeleton Crew**, Dominique Morisseau. Apr 13-May 11.

**Know Theatre of Cincinnati**, (513) 300-5669, [knowtheatre.com](http://knowtheatre.com)

**Mercury**, Steve Yockey; dir: Andrew Hungerford. Apr 19-May 11.

## OKLAHOMA

**CityRep**, Oklahoma City, (405) 848-3761, [cityrep.com](http://cityrep.com)

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time**, Simon Stephens; dir: W. Jerome Stevenson. Apr 4-7.

## OREGON

● **Artists Repertory Theatre**, Portland, (503) 241-1278, [artistsrep.org](http://artistsrep.org)

**Wolf Play**, Hansol Jung; dir: Dámaso Rodríguez. Thru Apr 7.

**The Revolutionists**, Lauren Gunderson; dir: Lava Alapai. Apr 28-May 26.

**Broadway Rose Theatre Company**, Tigard, (503) 620-5262, [broadwayrose.org](http://broadwayrose.org)

**A Grand Night For Singing**, lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein II; music: Richard Rodgers; dir: Dan Murphy. Thru Apr 28.

**CoHo Productions**, Portland, (503) 220-2646, [cohoproductions.org](http://cohoproductions.org)

**Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train**, Stephen Adley Guirgis; dir: Jamie Rea. Apr 19-May 11.

● **Corrib Theatre**, Portland, [corribtheatre.org](http://corribtheatre.org)

**How to Keep an Alien**, Sonya Kelly; dir: Gemma Whelan. Apr 12-May 5.

**Oregon Contemporary Theatre**, Eugene, (541) 465-1506, [octheatre.org](http://octheatre.org)

**Damascus**, Bennett Fisher; dir: Tara Wibrew. Thru Apr 14.

**Milagro**, Portland, (503) 236-7253, [milagro.org](http://milagro.org)

**Jump**, Charly Evon Simpson; dir: La'Tevin Alexander. Thru Apr 13.

**Oregon Children's Theatre**, Portland, (503) 228-9571, [octc.org](http://octc.org)

**The Legend of Rock Paper Scissors**, adapt: John Maclay; book: Drew Daywalt; music and lyrics: Eric Nordin; dir: Stan Foote. Thru Apr 14.

**Good Kids**, Naomi Iizuka. Apr 12-28.

**Jason and the Argonauts**, Robert Forrest; music: Daniel Padden; dir: Marcella Crowson. Apr 20-May 19.

**Oregon Shakespeare Festival**, Ashland, (800) 219-8161, [osfashland.org](http://osfashland.org)

**As You Like It**, Shakespeare; dir: Rosa Joshi. Thru Oct 27.

**Hairspray**, book: Thomas Meehan, Mark O'Donnell; lyrics: Marc Shaiman, Scott Wittman; dir: Christopher Liam Moore. Thru Oct 27.

**Mother Road**, Octavio Solis; dir: Bill Rauch. Thru Oct 26.

**Cambodian Rock Band**, Lauren Yee; dir: Chay Yew. Thru Oct 27.

**Between Two Knees**, 1491s; dir: Eric Ting. Apr 3-Oct 27.

● **Portland Center Stage**, (503) 445-3700, [pcs.org](http://pcs.org)

**Until the Flood**, Dael Orlandersmith; dir: Neel Keller. Thru Apr 21.

**Crossing Mnisose**, Mary Kathryn Nagle; dir: Molly Smith. Apr 13-May 5.

**Portland Playhouse**, (503) 488-5822, [portlandplayhouse.org](http://portlandplayhouse.org)

**Crowns**, Regina Taylor; dir: Padro Harris. Thru Apr 7.

● **Staged! Musical Theatre**, Portland, [stagedpdx.org](http://stagedpdx.org)

**In Trousers**, book, music, lyrics: William Finn; dir: Paul Angelo. Apr 26-May 25.

**Third Rail Repertory Theatre**, Portland, (503) 235-1101, [thirdrailrep.org](http://thirdrailrep.org)

**Kiss**, Guillermo Calderon; dir: Philip Cuomo. Thru Apr 6.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**1812 Productions**, Philadelphia, (215) 592-9560, [1812productions.org](http://1812productions.org)

**The God Project**, Jennifer Childs, Sean Close; dir: David Bradley. Apr 25-May 19.

**Act II Playhouse**, Ambler, (215) 654-0200, [act2.org](http://act2.org)

**Same Time, Next Year**, Bernard Slade; dir: Noah Herman. Thru Apr 14.

**Aggy the Adventurer**, Kim Carson. Thru Apr 7.

**Arden Theatre Co**, Philadelphia, (215) 922-1122, [ardenttheatre.org](http://ardenttheatre.org)

**How I Learned What I Learned**, Todd Kreidler, August Wilson; dir: Malika Oyetimein. Thru Apr 14.

**Children's Show TBA**, Apr 3-Jun 9.

● **Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble**, (570) 784-8181, [bte.org](http://bte.org)

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time**, adapt: Simon Stephens; book: Mark Haddon; dir: Elizabeth Dowd. Thru Apr 14.

**Every Brilliant Thing**, Jonny Donahoe, Duncan MacMillan; dir: Eric Wunsch. Apr 25-May 19.

● **Bristol Riverside Theatre**, (215) 785-0100, [brtstage.org](http://brtstage.org)

**The Christians**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Matt Pfeiffer. Apr 30-May 19.

**City Theatre Company**, Pittsburgh, (412) 431-2489, [citytheatrecompany.org](http://citytheatrecompany.org)

**The Burdens**, Matt Schatz; dir: Marc Masterson. Apr 6-May 12.

● **EgoPo Classic Theater**, Philadelphia, (267) 273-1414, [egopo.org](http://egopo.org)

**Egoli**, Matsemela Manaka; dir: Katrina Shobe. Thru Apr 7.

**'Master Harold'...and the boys**, Athol Fugard; dir: Lane Savadove. Thru Apr 7.

**Gamut Theatre Group**, Harrisburg, (717) 238-4111, [gamuttheatre.org](http://gamuttheatre.org)

**The Young Acting Company Presents: As You Like It**, Shakespeare; dir: Melissa Nicholson. Apr 12-14.

**InterAct Theatre Company**, Philadelphia, (215) 568-8079, [interacttheatre.org](http://interacttheatre.org)

**Heartland**, Gabriel Jason Dean; dir: Evren Odcikin. Thru Apr 21.

**Lantern Theater Company**, Philadelphia, (215) 829-0395, [lanterntheater.org](http://lanterntheater.org)

**Measure for Measure**, Shakespeare; dir: Charles McMahon. Thru Apr 21.

**Montgomery Theater**, Souderton, (215) 723-9984, [montgomerytheater.org](http://montgomerytheater.org)

**Dames at Sea**, George Haimsohn, Robin Miller; lyrics: Jim Wise; dir: Stephen Casey. Thru Apr 14.

● **Open Stage of Harrisburg**, (717) 232-6736, [openstagehbg.com](http://openstagehbg.com)

**The Kids You Read About in Textbooks**, Apr 7-May 5.

**A Wrinkle in Time**, Apr 11-14.

● **People's Light**, Malvern, (610) 644-3500, [peopleslight.org](http://peopleslight.org)

**For Peter Pan on Her 70th Birthday**, Sarah Ruhl; dir: Abigail Adams. Apr 10-May 12.

● **Pittsburgh Public Theater**, (412) 316-1600, [ppt.org](http://ppt.org)

**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Ted Pappas. Thru Apr 7.

**Indecent**, Paula Vogel; dir: Risa Brainin. Apr 18-May 19.

**Quintessence Theatre Group**, Philadelphia, (215) 987-4450, [qtgrep.org](http://qtgrep.org)

**King Lear**, Shakespeare; dir: Alexander Burns. Thru Apr 20.

**Theatre Horizon**, Norristown, (610) 283-2230, [theatrehorizon.org](http://theatrehorizon.org)

**The Few**, Samuel D. Hunter. Thru Apr 7.

**Touchstone Theatre**, Bethlehem, (610) 867-1689, [touchstone.org](http://touchstone.org)

**Sakura**, Keiin Yoshimura. Apr 11-14.

**The Wilma Theater**, Philadelphia, (215) 546-7824, [wilmateater.org](http://wilmateater.org)

**Dionysus Was Such A Nice Man**, Kate Tarker; dir: Dominique Serrand. Apr 23-May 12.

## RHODE ISLAND

**Gamm Theatre**, Warwick, (401) 723-4266, [gammtheatre.org](http://gammtheatre.org)

**True West**, Sam Shepard; dir: Judith Swift. Apr 11-May 5.

● **Trinity Repertory Co**, Providence, (401) 351-4242, [trinityrep.com](http://trinityrep.com)

**The Song of Summer**, Lauren Yee; dir: Taibi Magar. Thru Apr 14.

**Little Shop of Horrors**, book and lyrics: Howard Ashman; music: Alan Menken; dir: Tyler Dobrowsky. Apr 11-May 12.

**The Wilbury Theatre Group**, Providence, (401) 400-7100, [thewilburygroup.org](http://thewilburygroup.org)

**Constellations**, Nick Payne; dir: Aubrey Snowden. Thru Apr 13.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

**Centre Stage**, Greenville, (864) 233-6733, [centrestage.org](http://centrestage.org)

**Into The Woods**, book: James Lapine; music: Stephen Sondheim. Thru Apr 7.

**Treehouse**, Joe Musso. Thru Apr 3.

**Charleston Stage**, (843) 577-7183, [charlestonstage.com](http://charlestonstage.com)

**Disney's Beauty and the Beast**, book: Linda Woolverton; lyrics: Howard Ashman, Tim Rice; music: Alan Menken; dir: Marybeth Clark. Apr 3-28.

**The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley**, book, music, lyrics: Timothy Allen McDonald; music and lyrics: Jonathan K. Waller; music: Stephen Gabriel, David Weinstein; dir: Sam Henderson. Apr 20-27.

**Lean Ensemble Theater**, Hilton Head Island, (843) 715-6676, [leanensemble.org](http://leanensemble.org)

**Barefoot in the Park**, Neil Simon; dir: Blake White. Apr 25-May 5.

● **PURE Theatre**, Charleston, (843) 723-4444, [puretheatre.org](http://puretheatre.org)

**TBA**, Apr 19-May 11.

**Trustus Theatre**, Columbia, (803) 254-9732, [trustus.org](http://trustus.org)

**F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby**, adapt: Simon Levy; dir: Chad Henderson. Apr 5-27.

**The Village Repertory Co**, Charleston, [villagerep.com](http://villagerep.com)

**Ben Butler**, Richard Strand; dir: Keely Enright. Thru Apr 6.

**Hollywood**, Joe DiPietro; dir: Keely Enright. Apr 26-May 18.

**The Warehouse Theatre**, Greenville, (864) 235-6948, [warehousetheatre.com](http://warehousetheatre.com)

**Cry It Out**, Molly Smith Metzler; dir: Rebekah Suellau. Apr 26-May 12.

## TENNESSEE

**Clarence Brown Theatre Co**, Knoxville, (865) 974-5161, [clarencbrowntheatre.org](http://clarencbrowntheatre.org)

**The Real Inspector Hound**, Tom Stoppard; dir: Terry Silver-Alford. Thru Apr 14.

**The Madwoman of Chaillot**, Jean Giraudoux; trans: Laurence Senelick; dir: Paul Barnes. Apr 24-May 12.

**Nashville Repertory Theatre**, Nashville, (615) 782-4040, [nashvillerep.org](http://nashvillerep.org)

**Shakespeare in Love**, adapt: Lee HALL; music: Paddy Cunneen; dir: Rene Copeland. Thru Apr 13.

## TEXAS

**A. D. Players**, Houston, [adplayers.org](http://adplayers.org)

**JCG Legacy Series**, Jeannette Clift George; dir: Kevin Dean. Apr 10-14.

**Juan, Su Historia**, Jeannette Clift George; dir: Marion Arthur Kirby. Apr 18-20.

**Alley Theatre**, Houston, (713) 220-5700, [alleytheatre.org](http://alleytheatre.org)

**Crimes of the Heart**, Beth Henley; dir: Theresa Rebeck. Apr 12-May 5.

● **Austin Playhouse**, [austinplayhouse.com](http://austinplayhouse.com)

**The Book of Will**, Lauren Gunderson; dir: Lara Toner Haddock. Apr 5-May 5.

**Summer and Bird**, Katherine Catmull. Apr 29-May 11.

**Cara Mía Theatre Co**, Dallas, (214) 516-0706, [caramiatheatre.org](http://caramiatheatre.org)

**Teatro en Fuga: A Festival of New Works**, Apr 12-28.

**The Catastrophic Theatre**, Houston, (713) 521-4533, [catastrophictheatre.com](http://catastrophictheatre.com)

**Toast**, Brian Jucha. Apr 12-May 5.

● **Circle Theatre**, Fort Worth, (817) 877-3040, [circletheatre.com](http://circletheatre.com)

**Office Hour**, Julia Cho. Apr 18-May 11.

● **Dallas Children's Theater**, (214) 740-0051, [dct.org](http://dct.org)

**Tuck Everlasting**, Mark J. Frattaroli. Thru Apr 7.

**Dallas Theater Center**, (214) 252-3927, [dallastheatercenter.org](http://dallastheatercenter.org)

**The Wolves**, Sarah DeLappe; dir: Wendy Dann. Thru Apr 14. Co-production with Southern Methodist University, TX

**Twelfth Night**, Shakespeare; dir: Kevin Moriarty. Thru Apr 28.

**Real Women Have Curves**, Josefina López; dir: Christie Vela. Apr 26-May 19.

● **The Ensemble Theatre Houston**, (713) 807-4300, [EnsembleHouston.org](http://EnsembleHouston.org)

**Freeda Peoples**, Joyce Sylvester; dir: Eileen J. Morris. Thru Apr 14.

**Kitchen Dog Theater**, Dallas, (214) 953-1055, [kitchendogtheater.org](http://kitchendogtheater.org)

**Wolf at the Door**, Marisela Treviño Orta; dir: Christopher Carlos. Apr 11-May 5.

**Main Street Theater**, Houston, (713) 524-6706, [mainstreettheater.com](http://mainstreettheater.com)

**Schoolhouse Rock Live!**, adapt: Theatre BAM; book: Scott Ferguson, Kyle Hall, George Keating; music and lyrics: Lynn Ahrens, Bob Dorough, Dave Frishberg, Kathy Mandry, George Newall, Tom Yohe; dir: Daria Allen. Thru May 24.

**The Weir**, Conor McPherson; dir: Andrew Ruthven. Thru Apr 7.

**Goosebumps the Musical: Phantom of the Auditorium**, book and lyrics: John Maclay; music: Danny Abosch. Apr 14-May 11.

● **Mary Moody Northen Theatre**, Austin, (512) 448-8484, [stedwards.edu/theatre](http://stedwards.edu/theatre)

**Spring Awakening**, book and lyrics: Steven Sater; music: Duncan Sheik. Apr 4-14.

**Second Thought Theatre**, Dallas, (866) 811-4111, [secondthoughttheatre.com](http://secondthoughttheatre.com)

**Lela & Co.**, Cordelia Lynn; dir: Kara-Lynn Vaeni. Apr 3-27.

● **Stage West Theatre**, Fort Worth, (817) 784-9378, [stagewest.org](http://stagewest.org)

**The Father**, adapt: Christopher Hampton from Florian Zeller; dir: Tina Parker. Apr 4-28.

**Stages Repertory Theatre**, Houston, (713) 527-0123, [stagestheatre.com](http://stagestheatre.com)

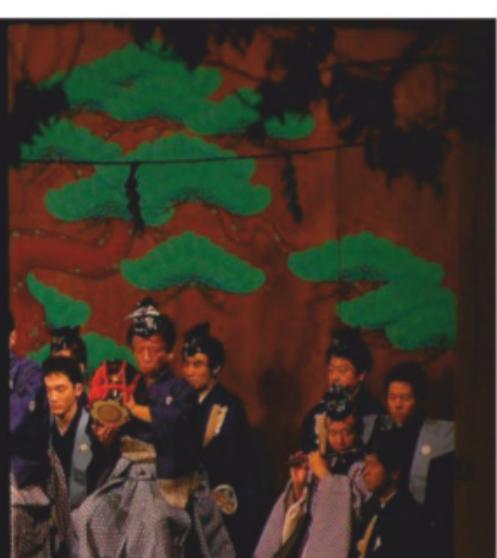
**Little Shop of Horrors**, book and lyrics: Howard Ashman; music: Alan Menken. Thru Apr 28.

**Murder for Two**, book and lyrics: Kellen Blair; book and music: Joe Kinosian. Apr 24-Jun 16.

**Bishop Arts Theatre Center**, Dallas, (214) 948-0716, [bishopartstheatre.org](http://bishopartstheatre.org)

**Down for #TheCount: A Women Playwrights One Act Play Festival**, France-Luce Benson, Emily Mann, Kat Ramsburg; dir: Camika Spencer. Thru Apr 7.

## PREVIEW COMING MAY/JUNE 19



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## THEATRE IN AND FROM JAPAN

The Land of the Rising Sun has both rich performance traditions and forward-looking cultural innovations, both deep roots and far-reaching branches. This special issue, with guest curation by international producer Cindy Sibilsky, will explore the island empire's long theatrical past, its vibrant present, and its promising future, both locally and globally.

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:** A backstage look at Theatre Communications Group's 2019 conference city, Miami; a profile of Chilean theatremaker Manuela Infante; Russell Harvard signs up for *Lear* on Broadway

**Theatre Three**, Dallas, (214) 871-3300, [theatre3dallas.com](http://theatre3dallas.com)

**Foxfire**, Susan Cooper, Hume Cronyn; dir: Emily Scott Banks. Thru Apr 7.

**Raptured**, Matt Coleman, Matt Lyle; dir: Jeffrey Schmidt. Apr 25-May 19.

**Undermain Theatre**, Dallas, (214) 747-5515, [undermain.org](http://undermain.org)

**Whither Goest Thou America: A Festival of New American Play Readings**, Apr 10-May 2.

**so go the ghosts of México, part three**, Matthew Paul Olmos; dir: Katherine Owens. Apr 12-May 5.

**The VORTEX**, Austin, (512) 478-5282, [vortexrep.org](http://vortexrep.org)

**Last: An Extinction Comedy**, Ensemble; dir: Rudy Ramirez. Thru Apr 27.

**WaterTower Theatre**, Addison, (972) 450-6232, [watertowertheatre.org](http://watertowertheatre.org)

**Everything is Wonderful**, Chelsea Marcantel; dir: Kelsey Leigh Ervi. Apr 19-May 12.

**ZACH Theatre**, Austin, (512) 476-0541, [zachtheatre.org](http://zachtheatre.org)

**Wake Up, Brother Bear!**, dir: Carolyn Dellinger. Thru Apr 21.

**Matilda the Musical**, book: Dennis Kelly; music and lyrics: Tim Minchin; dir: Nat Miller, Abe Rebold. Apr 3-May 12.

**The Ballad of Klook and Vinette**, book: Ché Walker; music and lyrics: Anoushka Lucas, Omar Lyefook. Apr 24-May 26.

## UTAH

**Salt Lake Acting Company**, Salt Lake City, (801) 363-7522, [saltlakeactingcompany.org](http://saltlakeactingcompany.org)

**Silent Dancer**, Kathleen Cahill; dir: Cynthia Fleming. Apr 10-May 12.

## VERMONT

**Northern Stage**, White River Junction, (802) 296-7000, [northernstage.org](http://northernstage.org)

**Once**, book: Enda Walsh; music and lyrics: Glen Hansard, Markéta Irglová. Apr 10-May 19.

**Vermont Stage**, Burlington, (802) 863-5966, [vermontstage.org](http://vermontstage.org)

**The Legend of Georgia McBride**, Matthew Lopez; dir: Gregory Ramos. Apr 17-May 5.

## VIRGINIA

● **1st Stage**, Tysons, [1ststagetysons.org](http://1ststagetysons.org)

**columbinus**, Stephen Karam, PJ Paparelli; dir: Alex Levy, Juan Francisco Villa. Thru Apr 20.

**American Shakespeare Center**, (540) 851-1733, [americanshakespearecenter.com](http://americanshakespearecenter.com)

**The Merry Wives of Windsor**, Shakespeare. Thru Apr 13.

**Henry IV, Part 1**, Shakespeare.

Thru Apr 11.

**Anne Page Hates Fun**, Amy E. Witting.

Thru Apr 14.

**The Belle's Stratagem**, Hannah Cowley.

Thru Apr 13.

**Arden of Faversham**, Thru Apr 12.

**The Comedy of Errors**, Shakespeare; dir: Desdemona Chiang. Apr 17-Jun 9.

**The Winter's Tale**, Shakespeare; dir: Kevin Rich. Apr 18-Jun 8.

**Antigone**, Sophocles; dir: Doreen Bechtol. Apr 19-Jun 7.

**Firehouse Theatre**, Richmond, (804) 355-2001, [firehousetheatre.org](http://firehousetheatre.org)

**River City Vaudeville**, Thru Apr 14.

**Burlesque Right Meow**, Thru Apr 28.

**Kennedy Center - Theater for Young Audiences**, Arlington, (202) 467-4600, [kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org)

**Broadway Center Stage: The Who's Tommy**, book: Des McAnuff, Pete Townshend; lyrics: Pete Townshend. Apr 24-28.

● **Virginia Repertory Theatre**, Richmond, (804) 282-2620, [virginiarep.org](http://virginiarep.org)

**Broadway Bound**, Neil Simon. Thru Apr 20.

**Atlantis: A New Musical**, book, music, lyrics: Matthew Lee Robinson; book: Ken Cerniglia, Scott Morris. Apr 12-May 5.

**Virginia Stage Company**, Norfolk, (757) 627-1234, [vastage.org](http://vastage.org)

**Native Gardens**, Karen Zacarias. Apr 10-28.

● **WSC Avant Bard**, Arlington, (703) 418-4808, [avantbard.org](http://avantbard.org)

**Topdog/Underdog**, Suzan-Lori Parks. Thru Apr 14.

## WASHINGTON

**The 5th Avenue Theatre**, Seattle, (206) 625-1900, [5thavenue.org](http://5thavenue.org)

**Marie: A New Musical**, book and lyrics: Lynn Ahrens; music: Stephen Flaherty; dir: Susan Stroman. Thru Apr 14.

**Urinetown**, book and lyrics: Greg Kotis; music and lyrics: Mark Hollman; dir: Bill Berry. Apr 6-Jun 9. Co-production with ACT - A Contemporary Theatre, WA

**The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical**, book: Joe Tracz; music and lyrics: Rob Rokicki; dir: Stephen Brackett. Apr 23-28.

● **ACT - A Contemporary Theatre**, Seattle, (206) 292-7676, [acttheatre.org](http://acttheatre.org)

**Urinetown**, Mark Hollmann, Greg Kotis; dir: Bill Berry. Apr 6-May 26. Co-production with The 5th Avenue Theatre, WA

**ARTSWEST**, Seattle, (206) 938-0339, [artswest.org](http://artswest.org)

**John**, Annie Baker. Thru Apr 7.

**Seattle Children's Theatre**, (206) 441-3322, [sct.org](http://sct.org)

**Balloonacy**, Barry Kornhauser; dir: Rita Giomi. Thru May 5.

**The Diary of Anne Frank**, adapt: Wendy Kesselman from Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett; dir: Janet Allen. Apr 4-May 19. Co-production with Indiana Repertory Theatre, IN

**Seattle Repertory Theatre**, (206) 443-2222, [seattlerep.org](http://seattlerep.org)

**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Braden Abraham. Thru Apr 28.

**Nina Simone: Four Women**, Christina Ham; dir: Valerie Curtis-Newton. Apr 26-Jun 2.

**Taproot Theatre Company**, Seattle, (206) 781-9707, [taproottheatre.org](http://taproottheatre.org)

**We Will Not Be Silent**, David Meyers. Thru Apr 27.

## WISCONSIN

● **Forward Theater Company**, Madison, (608) 258-4141, [forwardtheater.com](http://forwardtheater.com)

**Life Sucks**, Aaron Posner; dir: Jennifer Uphoff Gray. Thru Apr 14.

**Milwaukee Chamber Theatre**, (414) 291-7800, [milwaukeechambertheatre.com](http://milwaukeechambertheatre.com)

**Ben Butler**, Richard Strand; dir: Michael Cote. Apr 12-28.

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● **Milwaukee Repertory Theater**, (414) 224-9490, [milwaukeerep.com](http://milwaukeerep.com)

**Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash**, adapt: Jason Edwards, Richard Maltby, Jr., William Meade; dir: Dan Kazemi. Thru May 26.

**Rep Lab**, Apr 4-8.

**Every Brilliant Thing**, Jonny Donahoe, Duncan Macmillan; dir: Terrence J. Nolen. Apr 12-28.

**Two Trains Running**, August Wilson; dir: Timothy Douglas. Apr 16-May 12.

**Next Act Theatre**, Milwaukee, (414) 278-0765, [nextact.org](http://nextact.org)

**How to Write a New Book for the Bible**, Bill Cain; dir: David Cecsarini. Apr 4-28.

## WYOMING

**Off Square Theatre Company**, Jackson, (307) 733-4900, [offsquare.org](http://offsquare.org)

**Oslo**, J.T. Rogers. Apr 19-20.

## CONVERSATIONS

## TCG on Twitter

Reactions to our March 2019 issue on the state of Black theatre and artists.

**@SharonWashActor:** So proud to have been a part of this. Thanks @MonicaNdounou for including me. Onward!

**@TiknisArts:** Theatres across the US are staging a wider array than ever of plays reflecting varied experiences of the African American diaspora.

**@therose92:** There are no singular "Messiahs." We are a GANG of fucking Messiahs coming to save our stories from the slobbery rabies infested jaw of the White Supremic Gaze.

**@MINKAWILTZ:** This is exciting on many levels! Not holding my breath and waiting for approval kind of exciting.

**@DonnettaLavinia:** Well now this was a power read!!

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## WHAT'S HAPPENING

## SUPPORT THE NEA

Read Flordelino Lagundino's, artistic director at Park Square Theatre in St. Paul, Minn., testimony on behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts at the U.S. House of Representatives on the TCG Circle at <https://circle.tcg.org/blogs/flordelino-lagundino/2019/02/27/oral-testimony-of-flordelino-lagundino-artistic-di>.

## THE FUTURE OF THEATRE HAS ARRIVED

Read Long Wharf artistic director Jacob G. Padrón's remarks from the 2019 TCG Gala on the TCG Circle at <https://circle.tcg.org/blogs/jacob-padrón/2019/02/11/remarks-for-tcg-gala-2019>.

## TCG TALKS TECH

Read Hannah Fenlon's take on how virtual and augmented realities will show up at the 2019 National Conference on the TCG Circle <https://circle.tcg.org/blogs/hannah-fenlon/2019/02/14/tcg-talks-tech-virtual-and-augmented-reality>.

## NEW FROM TCG BOOKS

Next month TCG Books will release *Plays for the Public* by Richard Foreman. In his five decades of work in theatre, Foreman has become known as the figurehead of the "downtown" scene, the king of all things experimental and unconventional. This new anthology is a tribute to his mammoth acclaim, including such memorable works as *The Gods Are Pounding My Head!*, *Idiot Savant*, and *Old-Fashioned Prostitutes*. Order your copy at [tcg.org/TCGBookstore.aspx](https://tcg.org/TCGBookstore.aspx).



## TCG ONLINE

Can't get enough *American Theatre*? Be sure to visit our website for online-only content such as:

- More stories about theatre on Broadway, including a piece on how Taylor Mac, Heidi Schreck, Daniel Fish, and other American experimental theatre artists are making their Broadway debuts.
- An interview with Isabelle Huppert about her newest theatre project: *The Mother* at Atlantic Theater Company in New York City.
- The latest episodes of our podcasts: *Three on the Aisle*, *Token Theatre Friends*, and the *Subtext*.

Read all this and more at [americantheatre.org](https://americantheatre.org).

## ONSTAGE/THEATRE PROFILES

Up-to-date schedules of TCG theatres from coast to coast.

**PLUS:** details about production venues, designers and choreographers, artistic leader statements, and general information about each theatre at [tcg.org/profiles](https://tcg.org/profiles).

Emma Messenger and Regina Fernandez in *The Moors* at the Arvada Center for the Arts & Humanities in Colorado.



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Composed of leading trustees from member theatres across the country, the National Council for the American Theatre guides TCG's programs on governance and board development, and serves as a "brain trust" for the organization.

For information on joining the National Council, please contact **Adrian Budhu**, *Deputy Director and COO*: abudhu@tcg.org.

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A BETTER WORLD FOR THEATRE.  
A BETTER WORLD BECAUSE OF THEATRE.



**Daveed Diggs**, a Tony winner for *Hamilton*, has since focused on TV and film, including last year's *Blindspotting*, which he produced, wrote, and starred in. He returns to the stage of the Public Theater for Suzan-Lori Parks's *White Noise*, March 5-April 21. —Diep Tran

**I read a summary of the play, and it reminded me of *Blindspotting*.**

They are definitely pieces in conversation, for sure. It's about some of the inherent power dynamics that exist in interracial friendships but also in inter-gender friendships. One of the great things about it is that all the characters in the play are really doing well. Everyone has their own hardships they came from, but everyone is pretty successful by any American standard. In examining how race was designed to function in this country, they get in touch with a whole bunch of other shit, with a bunch of rage, with a bunch of fear, and start to doubt all the ways they've been successful.

**What kind of conversations are we not having that you think we should be having?**

There is a master-slave relationship this country is built on, and it is designed for that to be a very successful relationship. Most of us who don't believe that is okay are working really hard every day to not buy into it. But it is the easiest way to be successful, right? For all parties. This is a crazy thing to say, but this is the shit I've been dealing with in rehearsal: *I might feel safer if I was closer to a slave*. Does that make sense? If I aligned myself more closely with that role, if I sort of willingly gave up my freedom in a lot of ways. Some of the things that make me unsafe are the things that make me free, whereas if I gave those things up willingly, I might be treated with a different level of safety. I might feel less likely to be accosted by the police.

I think most of us who consider ourselves woke, we are actively fighting for everybody to not have to fall into those roles. But those roles exist and they were set up to be successful. And one of the things you lose by breaking them is protection.

**You've been racially profiled and harassed by police officers. For you to go to work and recreate that dynamic, how do you stay sane and balanced?**

The theatre is actually a very safe place to work through these things. It's the opposite of being profiled, because we're dedicated to the work and everybody in there is creating a safe space to examine these things. It actually is kind of a balancing force in and of itself.

**You used to be a middle school teacher. What do you think theatres can do to reach out to young people—especially poorer, more diverse people?**

The percentage of poor kids of color who are going to be excited about theatre is the same as any group of kids. It's just, you have to make it available to them. When I was in high school, we were down the street from Berkeley Rep, and they did a really great job about letting us come see previews. The educational outreach director there, Cliff Mayotte, used to just let us come sit in their library and read all their plays, or if there were interesting talkbacks, he would let us come to them. I think that relationship with an actual, practicing theatre is why I love theatre. I was given the access to it. And it was allowed to be on my terms, and the space was opened up for all of us. We used to have poetry slams at that theatre.

**Apart from Berkeley Rep, what are your favorite Bay Area theatres?**

I love the SF Playhouse. They were a second home to me in a lot of ways when I was coming up. I love a little tiny theatre called Custom Made Theatre. I had my first professional gig with them, a Václav Havel play when I was just out of college [*Temptation*]. It was a hard play—the final stage direction was basically that the whole theatre burns down. Very Havel. [Laughs]

**Do you ever think you'll go back to doing plays in tiny houses?**

I love performing in smaller houses. I think you get a different kind of connection there. You get a different kind of intimacy in a small space and I think everybody gets to know each other a little better.

As much as I loved performing on Broadway, I don't care if I ever do that again. I like telling stories in places where everyone is part of the storytelling. I get much more out of it when we all have to be in it together, when the audience isn't hidden and where you can really see all the energetic exchanges going on and we're all in conversation together. I think that kind of real in-the-moment work is the thing that's exciting for me. ☮

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